











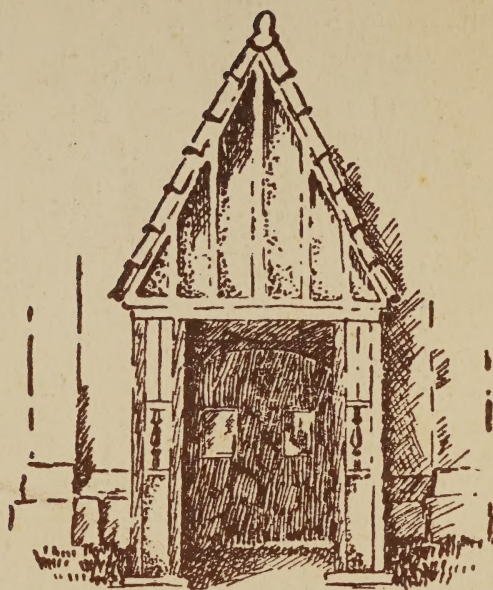


# ***HISTORY OF THE PEOPLES CHURCH***

*by Gertrude James*

***1869-1959***

*Price \$1.25*





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# HISTORY OF THE PEOPLES CHURCH

## 1869 - 1959

by

**Gertrude James**

Their dreams have now become our reality; their past has become our present. To be a member of such a church invisible is to appreciate the sufferings, the toil, and the triumph of past generations, to build on what has been done before, to draw inspiration from it, and to improve upon it.

—*Dr. Howard L. Parsons*  
*Interim Pastor, 1958*





## Foreword

The research for the history was begun in July 1958 largely from material that had for years been in dead storage in the care of Mr. Roy E. Curray. In fact there would have been no writing of this history if it had not been for Mr. Curray, who initiated the project and backed it with his enthusiasm, his time and his skill as an executive. He should be mentioned as the sponsor.

In March 1959 at two evening meetings a tentative copy of the manuscript was read aloud before Rev. N. W. Lovely, Mr. John M. Ely, Jr., Miss Grace Low and Mrs. James Young for critical review. Their priceless comments and suggestions are herewith gratefully acknowledged.

Several who had historical documents or vivid memories of events generously contributed to this history. They are mentioned on the page of Sources and References, but are formally thanked here.

More than one hundred sixty members are mentioned in this history. The names of many others are preserved in the minutes and records of the church. Available in these historical documents are lists of church members, officers of the church, members of the Board of Trustees, teachers in the School of Religion, members of important committees and workers in the various organizations.

The ultimate worth of this story of ninety years lies in the reader. He can make of it not just a record of the past, but a living and productive force for the future.

*Gertrude James*

*April 25, 1959*

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# History of the Peoples Church

## *Conditions Before 1869*

The early pioneers in Iowa were of many faiths. In Cedar Rapids, for example, from 1843 to 1880 there were established "all sorts of churches for all sorts of Christians" by those who came from older parts of the country and who naturally brought with them a preference for those forms of worship, doctrines and tenets to which they had been accustomed. A Methodist Mission was established here as early as 1843, just four years after the arrival of the first white settlers in 1839. The First Presbyterian Church was the first one to be fully organized here, July 9, 1847, eight years after the first white settler's arrival and only a few months after the admission of Iowa into the Federal Union in December 1846. Then followed Grace Episcopal Church in 1850, the First United Presbyterian Church in 1851, the Second (Westminster) Presbyterian in 1855, the First Baptist in 1869, the United Brethren Church in 1874. According to Father Flynn in a *History of Linn County*, the first Roman Catholic Mass was offered here in 1853 and a parish was organized in the early 1860's.\*

"An attempt at a liberal religious movement was made in the little town of Cedar Rapids in the early 1850's, but local opposition was strong indeed. The small group of independently-minded persons found life made fairly unpleasant for them."\*\*

"They had covenanted together for the purpose of giving testimony to the everlasting and ever-redeeming mercy of God. This was a reaction to the theology of Jonathan Edwards of sinners in the hands of an angry God. This little group received occasional encouragement from Mr. Livermore and his wife, Mary. Misfortune, removal and death made serious inroads upon this courageous group, leaving only a half-dozen to carry on the work in covenant together, with a result that this first attempt failed."\*\*\*

## *Founding of the First Universalist Church*

"Then the Civil War came on and religious differences were forgotten in the common effort. After the grass was again growing on the battlefields, some Cedar Rapids residents turned to the subject of an expression of religion devoid of harshness in creed."\*\*

"A small group of young men and women, in 1869, met in

\* Dr. Burkhalter's lecture.

\*\* *Palimpsest* of November 1949.

\*\*\* Dr. Argow's brief history.



Brown's Hotel on Commercial (First) Street and organized the First Universalist Society of Cedar Rapids, Iowa."\*

By that time the railroad had come; there were some six thousand inhabitants, as compared with sixteen hundred in 1860 and many less than that in the early 1850's. Conditions were more propitious for the growth of a liberal group. The abstract shows that the church was incorporated on February 4, 1870 and filed March 31, 1870, but it states that these articles were not acknowledged (were not certified in legal form). The incorporators were H. J. Harvey, J. C. Adams, F. J. Upton and A. G. Plumb.

The earliest book of proceedings includes the Constitution and the names of the charter members as follows: F. J. Upton, Amasa Mann, C. W. Burton, E. Bliss, H. E. Upton, H. J. Smith, George H. Nicholas, Mrs. George Nicholas, Mr. James Bates, Mrs. J. Bates, Mrs. M. L. Parkhurst, A. G. Plumb, Louise M. Plumb, Lottie A. Brubacker, O. S. Bowling and L. W. Nicholas. But another list has also among the charter members Mr. and Mrs. F. D. Rollins, L. E. Jenkins, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Jacobs, George W. Waldron and A. B. Everett.

The first dated entry in the minutes is for March 22, 1874. It states that the Constitution and By-Laws were adopted. The first recorded officers of the society were: Moderator—C. W. Burton; Clerk—J. C. Van Alstyne; Treasurer—Amasa Mann. A committee on securing a lot had made no progress. A building committee was appointed, consisting of F. J. Upton, Chairman, J. W. Traer, and John Thomas. The next recorded meeting, May 20, 1874, concerned the announcement that they had secured at \$25 a month for an indefinite period of time, an upstairs hall over 15 Commercial (First) Street. The record skips over the rest of 1874. The next entry in the minutes was dated January 10, 1875, and recorded that subscriptions for a building fund had been started, and January 17 it noted that a report of the soliciting committee was made, but the report was not recorded in the minutes.

New articles of incorporation were drawn, defectively acknowledged and signed February 27, 1875, and recorded in the office of the County Recorder March 4, 1875. These articles were filed as follows:

"We, Amasa Mann, C. W. Burton, J. C. Van Alstyne, F. J. Upton, Ethan Bliss, and John T. Smith declare ourselves associated for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a church organization in the City of Cedar Rapids." Their objects were the "diffusion of the Christian Religion, the erection of a building for church purposes and to perform

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\* Dr. Argow's brief history.

all other acts necessary to the success and prosperity of said organization." There were two others, George W. Waldron and George H. Nicholas, who completed the trustees for the "first year of the corporate existence of said church."

Dr. E. R. Burkhalter, long time pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, who in 1923 had access to our valuable historical paper by C. W. Burton, which has since been lost, wrote:

"Baptist Hall on Commercial (First) Street was rented to this new society when the Baptists removed to their new edifice on Second Avenue and Third Street (Northeast Corner) and the hall was christened Universalist Hall. Mr. W. C. Brooks remained about two years and was followed by Mr. B. T. Snooks, who also remained about two years. Mr. Rogers succeeded Mr. Snooks. In the year 1874 under Mr. Rogers' administration efforts were made to erect a suitable building for the purpose, and considerable money—for that period at least—was needed. The pledges amounted to \$7,000. On the first of January, 1875, Mr. Upton, who had been among the foremost workers and givers in the cause, deeded to the trustees of this church a lot on the corner of Sixth Street and Third Avenue, where The Peoples Church now stands. He had bought the lot of Dr. John F. and Mrs. Mary A. Ely for this purpose."

In the abstract the property is described as lot 10, block 48, the Original Town, now City of Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa. The land was originally acquired by Addison Daniels and Nicholas Brown from the United States, dated December First, 1845, and signed by President James K. Polk. The lot was secured as indicated above by the First Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids. Then October 10, 1882, the rear 46 feet fronting on Monroe (Sixth) Street by 60 feet in depth across the rear was transferred to F. J. Upton, in conformity to a resolution passed at a parish meeting, May 3, 1882. In the church minutes it states that the parish accepted October 16, 1881, the terms by which F. J. Upton would pay ten percent of the indebtedness in exchange for this section of the lot.

Thus the abstract is in two parts, part one covering the front of the lot and part two the rear 46 feet.

On the death of F. J. Upton and then of his widow, the rear 46 feet passed through various hands, including Walter D. Douglas for George C. Douglas and Edward D. Douglas. It was then sold to C. R. Jones from whom J. M. Grimm, a member of this church, bought it November First, 1913. Then March 9, 1914, it was sold to the First Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, thus returning to the ownership of this church after a lapse of 32 years.

## *Laying of the Cornerstone*

The cornerstone of the present church building was laid July First, 1875. To quote from the *History of Crescent Lodge #25 A. F. and A. M. (Ancient Free and Accepted Masons)* in the volume for the years 1850-1905:

"*The Cedar Rapids Republican* in 1875, mentioning the beginning of work on the new Universalist Church, suggested that its cornerstone be laid with Masonic ceremonies. The suggestion was received with favor. A joint meeting of both lodges (Crescent and Mount Hermon) was held June 11, at which time committees were appointed on Invitation, Arrangements, Reception, and Marshall.

"These committees, representing the two lodges began active work and carried arrangements to a very satisfactory conclusion. The cornerstone was duly laid July 1, 1875. Nearly 600 Masons from surrounding towns had signified intention to attend, but unpleasant weather cut down the number. Large delegations were present from Dubuque, Farley, Davenport, Monticello, Anamosa, Marion and Shellsburg, while other lodges sent representatives. The procession moved in a heavy rain, and as a consequence this was cut short. A triumphal arch, beautiful with flowers, had been erected on Park Avenue (Third) and under this all passed to reach the site of the church. (Then follows the full list of acting Grand Officers on the occasion.)

"At the close of these public exercises the visitors were invited to Masonic Hall, where Mt. Hermon Lodge was opened and third degree conferred. The evening ended with a reception tendered by ladies of the Universalist Congregation. Refreshments were served and speech-making followed. To the sentiment, *Ancient Free Masonry*, Rev. A. Countryman of Dubuque responded. James L. Enos gave fitting thanks to *Our Invited Guests*. *The Ladies of the Church* found eloquent spokesman in A. R. West, and Past Grand Master Guilbert had agreeable and adequate subject in *The Universal Brotherhood of Man*."

The cornerstone, considerably weather-beaten, still bears these words: "Christ will conquer; Laid by A. F. and A. M., July First, 1875.

The minutes state that the building was begun under the leadership and inspiration of the Rev. B. F. Rogers, "to whom the church owes a lasting debt of gratitude." It was he who found that the church had not been legally incorporated in 1870 and he presided when the new Articles of Incorporation were read and adopted. The Board of Trustees was appointed as the incorporators. A new constitution was to be drawn up by the pastor and was adopted in "Universalist Hall" February 28, 1875. On March 6, 1875, the new By-laws, which had been drawn up by the pastor, were thoroughly discussed, amended, and adopted. Committees were appointed on Membership, Sick and Poor, Mission Work, Sunday School, Reception of Strangers and Music.



## *The First Constitution*

The Preamble of the Constitution of this Universalist Society read as follows:

“Believing in the Church as an organization instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ for the special expression of Christian faith and consecration and as a means of Christian Culture, we hereby associate ourselves in such relations and adopt for our government the following constitution.”

The pastor must have the fellowship of the General Convention of the Universalists. According to the first draft of the constitution the minister was the moderator, *ex officio*, at all meetings. He gave the order to the treasurer for the payment of funds. He was also to appoint all committees. However, this had been changed by 1874.

As to membership, a candidate had to assent to the Confession of Faith, adopted at a Convention of Universalists in Winchester, New Hampshire, in 1803. He had to be an attendant at services for at least six months, contributing to the financial support of the church, and of good moral character. He had to apply for membership and, when the church was satisfied of his good Christian character, be approved unanimously.

To qualify to vote there were three requirements: (1) sympathy with the doctrines (2) contributing to the support of the church and (3) to have worshipped with the congregation six months. The church also had a rule that only members contributing at least \$10 a year could vote on salaries.

Baptism was not a requisite, but this rite would be performed on request of the applicant. The new member was given the “right hand of fellowship” by the minister. The sacrament of communion was also a part of the worship from time to time.

To show how “ecclesiastic” and “non-progressive” the Winchester Confession of Faith really was, and for use in studying the evolution of the beliefs of this church, here is a copy of it:

1. We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the character of God and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind.

2. We believe that there is one God, whose nature is love, revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of man to Holiness and Happiness.

3. We believe that Holiness and true Happiness are inseparably connected and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works, for these things are good and profitable unto men.

On March 26, 1882, an amendment to the By-laws was proposed, to liberalize the requirements, as follows:

“Because many good men and women of upright life and spotless character sympathize with many objects of the Universalist Church and

contribute liberally to its support, but can not conscientiously bind themselves by a fixed, non-progressive and ecclesiastic confession of faith, they may become members if voted in and sign the following declaration: We, the undersigned, believing in an upright life, pure character and good works and in the eternal worth and beauty of the morals and ethics exemplified by the life and works of Jesus of Nazareth, hereby associate ourselves with this church as members thereof."

### ***Financial Burdens***

The financial burdens on any pastor of that period must have been terrific, due to small numbers, inadequate support and the panic of 1873. James Truslow Adams in his *Epic of America*, writes:

"Amid all this frenzied 'prosperity,' labor had not fared well. The inflation of prices, due to paper money and the war, had raised wages in terms of money, but although by 1866 wages were about sixty per cent above those of 1860, the workmen were not as well off, the rise in commodity prices having been about ninety per cent and in rents yet greater. The panic which swept the country in 1873 added to their distress . . . Five thousand commercial houses failed in 1873, 5,830 in 1874, 7,740 in 1875, 9,092 in 1876, almost 9,000 in 1877, and 10,478 in 1878."

At a called meeting of the Board of Trustees, September 11, 1875, they received the resignation of Rev. Rogers, as he "cannot endure the financial strain of non-payment of his salary." The resignation was accepted, but they moved to ask him to remain for the time being to devote his time to the furtherance of the church building. Then on September 14th the Trustees decided to ask Rev. Rogers to stay on at the same salary and try to collect the subscriptions and get new ones, at ten cents \* (to him) for each collection. Then they were to see if the builders would enclose the building and finish the basement for the amount collected and the notes obtained for the remainder. On December 19, 1875, the Trustees decided to notify the owners of the hall that the church wished to vacate it on January 1, 1876, or "as soon thereafter as they will permit." Then December 28 the Trustees moved to pay Rev. Rogers the salary due him from the building fund. They also decided to offer Mr. Rogers twenty-five cents on all new subscriptions after January 1st and ten cents for collections of old ones under \$100 and five cents for those over \$100. \*\*

On May 14, 1876, the Trustees decided to call Rev. H. W. Chase for three months, but by August 5 they employed him for one year or until the church should be dedicated, at \$20 a

\* This may mean ten per cent.

\*\* Again this may mean per cent.

Sunday, provided collections could be raised to that amount. On December 27, 1876, insurance on the building for \$2000 was approved. Then March 28, 1877, they secured a loan of two thousand dollars from John H. Bassett of New York for a mortgage, and June 8 they got a loan of \$100 from the Ladies Aid Society, the first mention of that organization.

At a parish meeting June 24, 1877, sixteen members were present to approve a list of new members. They were unanimously approved!

On September 19, 1877, there were apparently two ministerial candidates for the coming year—H. W. Chase and W. W. Nutting. Rev. Nutting received 12 votes and Rev. Chase three, so the latter had to be notified.

### ***The Dedication of the Church Building***

In the first book of minutes of the Universalist Church is pasted a clipping from the *Cedar Rapids Republican* of June 17, 1878, concerning the dedication of this building as follows:

"This society began its work about nine years ago in a small way. They held services for several years in a hall, removing into the vestry (first floor) of their church in January 1876. The building is now completed except for the spire. The organ is not yet in place, but has been ordered. The pews will seat 300, with room for chairs as needed. To date the cost is around \$12,000 (lot included). After a careful examination of the work, we have reached the conclusion that never before within our knowledge was the same amount of money so judiciously expended upon a church. Although the membership of the church is comparatively small, it is composed of *first class working material*. Credit is due to every man and woman who aided. Mention should be made of the services of the chairman, Mr. F. J. Upton, to whose generosity, zeal in the cause, untiring energy and most excellent judgment, the church is largely indebted.

"The church was becomingly decorated with flowers charmingly arranged, by hands that counted this a work of love. The music furnished for the several services of the day was one of the chief pleasures of the occasion. Dr. Bliss arranged for the morning and evening services, several ladies and gentlemen from other churches assisting the Universalist choir. The choir of Grace Church furnished music for the afternoon services. Rev. J. H. Tuttle of Minneapolis preached the dedicatory sermon. Dr. Hanson of Chicago made an appeal for funds to pay the debt of four thousand dollars and within one hour over \$2,000 were raised. In the evening Dr. Hanson secured cash and pledges to free the church of debt. In the afternoon



Dr. Hines of Cedar Falls spoke and Dr. Hanson preached in the evening."

It also states in the minutes that the auditorium was finished and furnished under the leadership of Rev. W. W. Nutting, "who has rendered very valuable services in giving new life and increased prosperity to the church."

### *From 1878 to 1884*

On September 19, 1878, it was decided that Rev. Nutting was to stay another year, and on March 2, 1879, the parish unanimously adopted by a rising vote the resolution to install Rev. Nutting as pastor and to name an early day for the ceremony. He was installed Thursday evening March 18, with Rev. J. W. Hanson preaching the installation sermon. Then in May Rev. Nutting offered to contribute \$300 of his \$1500 salary to the church until such time as the finances of the church would warrant the withdrawal of the subscription. In July Rev. Nutting asked for a vacation of six weeks, as he was worn out because of anxiety over conditions of the church. Then in August he sent a letter of resignation as pastor.

After the abrupt resignation of Rev. Nutting the church was closed until, on November 23, 1879, a meeting of the Board of Trustees was called to "discuss resuming services," held up by indebtedness. They undertook a subscription campaign to remove indebtedness, but there is no hint as to its success. At this same meeting they voted to call Rev. D. H. Rogan of Newton, Iowa, for January 1, 1880, provided they could get enough from rental of pews to pay \$1100 in salary. On December 17, they made it official to call Rev. Rogan for one year. Each year he was re-elected; October 26, 1881, he was re-elected by a vote of twenty out of twenty-one with the following resolution:

"Tender him our warmest thanks for his able and efficient services during his stay with us and we express our satisfaction at the present flourishing and growing condition of the society—the result of the ministrations of Mr. Rogan."

He was to receive \$1200 a year. Mr. Rogan was called for 1883 also, but by December 30, 1883, the church was again looking for a new minister. In the meantime they called Mr. Rogan to preach for three months at \$20 a Sunday, but he could take another position if available. Though there is no record of the termination of his ministry, this temporary arrangement must have lasted only a few months.



## *Ministry of Dr. W. A. Pratt*

In April 1884 the church called Rev. William A. Pratt, "a young minister, who brought to this work the idealism of youth, together with the fine ability to organize frayed ends of a tangled situation into a working unit." \*They could pay him only one thousand dollars. The minutes are inadequate even for the Annual Meetings. They accepted reports, but the contents were not recorded or filed. One concludes that throughout his pastorate the church was burdened with debt so that in 1888 "in consideration of three hundred dollars the church property was transferred to the Society of the Iowa Universalist Convention under condition that the property never be alienated from the Universalist church encumbered with debts." In 1881 a resolution was prepared, but laid on the table as follows:

"Deeded the church building to the State Convention on condition that the State Convention reconvey it in trust for the use of this church."

In the abstract it says that April 4, 1888, the property was conveyed to the Universalist Convention and on May 7, 1888, it was conveyed to the Universalist Church. At a meeting May 9, 1900, Mr. Clarence N. Jenkins explained the fact that the church property was deeded to the Iowa Universalist Convention in exchange for financial help.

The Board of Trustees gave the pastor eight weeks vacation in 1889 and suspended evening services. The parish "voted thanks to Rev. Pratt and Rev. Conn for help in paying off the church debts." In this vote of thanks they also included "the state convention and all others who have donated for relief of debt."

On February 13, 1889, Rev. Pratt resigned to take effect April 1. An almost chance request took him out of the Universalist ministry and made him one of the most successful organizers and conductors of tours to Europe. A Mr. James C. Davis of Keokuk asked him to accompany him to Europe. Dr. Pratt then organized the Pratt Tours in 1891 and continued them each summer except the three years of the First World War.

## *Ministry of Rev. J. H. Palmer*

The parish called Rev. J. H. Palmer April 10, 1889. At the annual meeting May 7, 1889, they voted that the name of Mary L. Pingrey\*\* be on the books of the church, an action that resulted in generous financial help ten years later. This was the first time a parish supper was mentioned at an annual meeting. In 1891 the treasurer reported quite a satisfactory

\* From Dr. Argow's brief history.

\*\* Also spelled Pingree.

condition of finances. By 1893 the church building needed repairs of roof, furnace, gutters and pointing up bricks, with a debt for a "sidewalk of cement across the front of the church to the curb, six feet wide and from the horse-block to the entrance." A sum of \$1200 was needed to refund the debt and pay these expenses. The minutes make no explanation of how this debt was handled or the activities of the church up to 1899, but under the date of January 8, 1899, there is a detailed entry, entitled "Mary L. Pingrey's Gift" as follows:

"During the hour of morning service a complete and most enjoyable surprise was sprung upon the parish, being the announcement by the Treasurer of the fact that Mrs. Mary L. Pingrey of Wayne, Nebraska, had presented the parish with \$2000, contingent upon its being supplemented by a sufficient sum and used to entirely liquidate the debt of the parish."

The moderator stated that the principal and accrued interest on the first and second mortgages against the church property had been found to aggregate \$2,168.12 and that the residue of \$168.12 had been paid over to him by Mrs. C. D. Van Vechten on behalf of the Ladies' Aid Society, that the two mortgages had been paid off and the church property was now clear of all encumbrances.

"A period of great rejoicing followed. The regular services were dropped and thankfulness became the order of the hour." Mr. C. D. Van Vechten offered four resolutions, summarized as follows:

First, a letter of gratitude to Mrs. Pingrey from the pastor; second, a Sunday for a Memorial Service to commemorate this great event in our church; third, a committee of three ladies to make a plan for a lasting testimonial to Mrs. Pingrey, "which, so long as one brick rests on another in this church, will constantly remind those who come here of our debt of gratitude to her memory"; fourth, to record these resolutions and the letter in the minutes.

The committee on the "lasting testimonial" reported that the "Home for the Friendless" was to build a new building and suggested that the church contribute "suitable and complete furnishing of a room in this noble institution of our city, to be renewed and kept in good condition while this church exists, always to be described as the Mary L. Pingrey Memorial Room, established by the First Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids."\*

At the Memorial Sunday Program there were four addresses. One was by Mr. W. F. Hayford, entitled "Our Benefactress."

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\* This was verified from the history of the Children's Home concerning the furnishing of a small reception room by our ladies and to continue this as a memorial, replacing or adding to the furnishings from time to time. The room has disappeared in the course of remodelling.

Then Mr. C. W. Burton read a paper of "great historical value" on the "Origin and Beginning of the Universalist Society in Cedar Rapids." This was followed by one entitled "Our Day of Effort and Hope" by Clarence N. Jenkins. All three were labeled Historical Documents to Be Preserved, but only the one by Mr. Jenkins has survived. The fourth was an address by Rev. Amos Conn, "who has long known the trials and triumphs of this church." Here is a quotation from "Our Day of Effort and Hope," that is as apt today as then:

"I would warn you against being lulled to sleep by the thought that our property is out of danger. Title to a property does not make a church. It may and does help, but in and of itself does not bring success. We must still consecrate our efforts, we must still make heroic sacrifices and we must be faithful to our trust."

Up until the remodelling of the church in 1925 there was a plaque on the wall of the upper stairway bearing these words:

"In memory of Mrs. Mary L. Pingrey  
who, by the gift of \$2,000 freed this  
church from debt." \*

At the annual meeting for 1899 resolutions were drawn up on the death of John R. Baker,

"in high appreciation of his integrity, his high sense of honor and his value to this society as a worthy co-worker, who ever had in view its best interests, and to the City of Cedar Rapids, of which he was a trusted and loyal citizen."

In May 1900 at the annual meeting Rev. Palmer reviewed his relations with the church for the last eleven years and then declared that he thought it best to close his pastorate. Mr. C. D. Van Vechten said,

"This parish regrets and deplores the apparent necessity for Mr. Palmer's action in presenting his resignation. We have the greatest personal esteem and love for him, knowing him to be one of the ablest of preachers and one of the best of men. We wish to make a record of the debt of gratitude we owe him for all he has done for the parish and for its individual members."

On May 29 the Trustees, after vigorous discussion, voted to accept Mr. Palmer's resignation, but at a parish meeting 39 voted not to approve the action of the Trustees and 36 to approve. Realizing what this split in the church would mean, Mr. Palmer resigned June 11 "to take effect instanter." The church was then closed until September.

### *Short Pastorate of Rev. George Crum*

Rev. George Crum preached as a candidate August 26, 1900. After the service the Board of Trustees decided to call him.

\* Distinctly remembered by Grace Low.



An arrangement was made that "after ten months, either minister or church could cancel the arrangement on three months' notice." By December 1901 the Board approved buying a stereopticon for Sunday evening illustrated lectures. In 1902 the Trustees proposed a canvass for funds, an Easter offering and a men's supper. Then at the annual meeting in 1902 the parish asked the Trustees to notify Rev. Crum that his pastorate would terminate on October 1, and that the church be closed to open again at such time as "the Board sees fit." Rev. Crum resigned as of July 1, 1902, the Board agreeing to pay him until October 1.

### ***Return of Dr. W. A. Pratt as Minister***

In September 1902 the Trustees moved that the church be reopened and that they try to get the former pastor, Rev. W. A. Pratt, to preach. A committee was appointed to take charge of repairing and renovating the church, not to exceed \$400, though they did actually spend \$500. In 1903 they asked the Universalist State Convention for "pecuniary assistance" for two years. Then the following resolutions show that they did get help, from two quarters:

"That we commend the efforts which have been put forth by our friend and pastor, Rev. W. A. Pratt, and record our appreciation of his work and express our earnest desire for the continuation of his pastorate, if arrangements can be made that we can safely undertake."

"Resolved that the thanks of the First Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids be hereby extended to the State Convention for its generous help for the year 1903 and while our church life indicates that the society is slowly coming back to its old time prosperity, we feel that for the present year at least, if possible, your financial aid to the same amount be continued."

At the annual meeting in May 1905, the Trustees found "the church's finances in a prosperous condition" and in 1906 "matters look encouraging." This year at the annual meeting in October they had a "strong talk" by Mr. McLaughlin, Superintendent of the Churches of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. As a result they moved to organize a Layman's League, the organizing to be supervised by C. D. Van Vechten. In January 1907 the Trustees reported that "the general aspect of the financial situation looks good." Up to this time several had served as "Moderators" or Presidents: C. W. Burton, the first recorded one, J. F. Allison, J. Y. Kennedy, Miss Josephine Munholland, T. C. Munger, A. T. Cooper, J. M. Grimm and C. D. Van Vechten.

On October 18, 1907, at the annual meeting Rev. Pratt asked the parish to have him as a temporary pastor and look for a

new one. Though Dr. Pratt continued to serve the church for a few months, it is fitting to quote here, at the conclusion of Dr. Pratt's ministry, words that were said of him at his funeral service by a man who knew him well as neighbor and friend:

"Dr. Pratt possessed sturdiness of character, strength of will, integrity of thought and act, with which the term New Englander is associated. He was frugal, yet generous, doing many kindly acts stealthily. He possessed a splendid mind—its sweep broad with depth. His education was never 'finished,' for the range of his reading was as wide as the circumference of the earth. Yet, in spite of his manifold worldly interests, he was a minister still—he spoke, he lectured, he preached."

### ***Call to Dr. Joseph Fort Newton***

By January 1908 the Trustees were considering mortgaging the church for \$1400, and finally got a loan from the Cedar Rapids Building and Loan Association for \$1250. They set up a visiting committee of six members and a committee to solicit subscriptions. At a parish meeting in March there was a test vote on candidates. A large majority favored Dr. Joseph Fort Newton with scattered votes for several other candidates. A motion was made and seconded that the Board of Trustees extend a unanimous call to Dr. Newton on condition that the "Board can raise the money." In April the Trustees started a subscription-blank campaign for Rev. Newton's salary. This was apparently successful for Mr. J. M. Grimm was to be a committee of one "to get the new minister settled."

In the summer of 1908 Mr. A. W. Johnson, for many years honored treasurer of the church, died. Appropriate resolutions were authorized and a popular subscription of funds to meet funeral expenses and the mortgage on his home. This shows in what high regard he was held. Other valued members of this early period were Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Sands, printers, who did printing for the church practically without charge, Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Buser, parents of Mr. Ed Buser, and Mrs. Rachel Rosecrans, active in the Sunday School and Social Circle.

Dr. Joseph Fort Newton came as minister in September, 1908. In 1946 Rev. Waldemar Argow said of him,

"Dr. Newton is one of the great figures in the story of modern American religion and it was he who established our church as a unique experiment in liberal religion."

Dr. Newton had tried to make this experiment in Dixon, Illinois, in a stone church building where the Universalists had attempted to maintain a society and had failed. In his autobiography, *River of Years*, he said of the Dixon church:

"The church was free in its fellowship, requiring no rite, no confession of dogma; . . . People who had not been in a church for years joined and

became good workers, devoted if not devout; kindly people, public spirited with a passion for real service. It was an experiment I had wanted for years to make and the initial results were most encouraging."

He engaged in a crusade, however, against the rotten political gang that had a strangle hold on the county and the town, until his very life was in danger. From that situation he was called to this church.

Continuing to quote from his *River of Years*:

"My friend, Cyrenus Cole, in his *History of Iowa* remarks that I was 'born in Texas and born again in Iowa'; it was an actual fact . . . The people of Cedar Rapids wanted every institution in their city—a college, a church, a business—to be the best in the state; and they were ready and eager to help make it so. Even to this day, (the book was copyrighted in 1946) though I have wandered afar to London, and great cities in our own land, Cedar Rapids still seems more like home to me than any place on earth. There I made such friends as one makes only once in a lifetime; there I found myself and struck my stride—as preacher, as writer and in various and sundry activities for the common good and the culture of the best life.

"The church to which I went in Cedar Rapids had been a Universalist Society originally . . . I changed it from top to bottom, put it upon a new basis, and named it the Liberal Christian Church—better known, later, in the city and the state, as 'The Little Brick Church.' If it was called 'liberal,' it was not because I liked defining my Christianity by an adjective, for I did not; since those days all such labels have been rubbed off or grown dim. But, emphatically to me the word 'liberal' meant that a man was free to be a Christian, or to try for that goal, not that he held his Christianity loosely or lightly, still less as a denial of the faith of other men. To me a 'liberal' was one who had the same charity toward the past as toward the present and was as willing to listen to St. Bernard as to Bernard Shaw . . . In short, it meant that if the 'liberal pulpit' ignored certain dogmas about Christ, it was because it wanted Christ Himself brought nearer to us—with a demand which I knew would plague me with an unsatisfiable passion to be more like Him and do more for Him; or let Him do more with me.

"Strong men gathered about me, men strategic in the city and the state, and the church grew in power; it became one of the most influential congregations in the Commonwealth, out of all proportion to its numbers."

In December an invitation came to the church to participate in arranging for the appearance of Rev. Billy Sunday late



in 1909. It was unanimously agreed not to participate in the revival.

Dr. Newton's new membership card was adopted and one thousand were to be printed. The text is a reprint of the "Aim of the Society" in the new constitution, quoted below.

At the annual meeting for 1909 the ladies of the church served the supper. The attendance was large and enthusiastic with thorough harmony. The treasurer's report showed receipts for the year \$3,230.81 and expenses \$3,230.73, leaving a balance of eight cents.

Since ministers had traditionally been hired from year to year, the following resolution concerning the action of the Board in hiring Dr. Newton for two years was made:

"That the work in this church of Rev. Joseph Newton has been of the highest quality and has given universal satisfaction. He brought to his work rare native ability of thought and oratory, to which has been added the genuine polish of ripe scholarship. His sermons have been gems of love and hope and his lectures have not only charmed his hearers but have awakened a new and lasting literary activity in this community. He has actively mingled in the civic affairs of this city and has become a powerful influence for general uplift and progress in this community. We hereby endorse the action of the Board. We pledge them our earnest and active support in the performance of our part of this contract and harmoniously unite in the hope and confidence that the work of the coming year under his leadership and direction will result in a high water mark of success and progress for this church in years of pleasure and profit to the members and in the ultimate and common good of all."

### *1910 Revision of the Constitution*

A motion carried to revise the Constitution, to be done by a committee, with C. D. Van Vechten, A. T. Cooper, T. C. Munger, Mrs. Chandler and Mrs. J. G. Cherry as members with assistance from Dr. Newton. The revision was presented to and adopted by the parish at the annual meeting of June 1910, and was filed with the County Recorder August 8, 1910. The report of the committee said,

"The old organic law of the church had in some respects been outgrown and we found it necessary in such cases to build anew. For instance, the aim of the church embodies the modern thought of Christian unity, absolutely ignoring all creeds. This, we take it, is the standard of religious opinion among the rank and file of our membership. It will be a great incentive to the activity and growth of this church."

The Preamble to the Constitution stated:

Believing in the church as a means of Christian culture, and as a special instrument for the expression of Christian faith and service, we hereby associate ourselves in such relations and adopt for our government the following:—

*The Name:* The First Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. For

convenience and in public prints it shall use the name Liberal Christian Church.

*The Aim:* The aim of this church is to cultivate Freedom, Friendship and Fraternity in religion in behalf of all that makes for private nobility and public welfare. Believing that unity of spirit is better than a uniformity of theology, we welcome to our fellowship every one who is seeking truth and righteousness, whatever his faith or opinion may be, leaving each one free to think and act for himself. No creed or ritual is a requisite of membership, but simply a desire to help forward the cause of spiritual culture and higher life. \*

*Allegiance:* to the Universalist Brotherhood of the United States of America and affiliated with the Iowa Universalist Convention, but reserves the right to cooperate with any Brotherhood with which it finds work and fellowship congenial.

*Baptism:* This church does not regard water-baptism in any form as a binding ordinance essential to Christian fellowship. It recognizes the propriety of it as a symbol to those who do so regard it. If desired by applicant, the minister shall administer it or cause it to be administered.

The other items were about the same as in former constitutions.

At this same annual meeting the first mention was made of the Ladies' Social Circle, in addition to the Ladies' Aid Society. The Younger Set reported as its aim "the upbuilding of a social feeling and closer acquaintance among the young ladies and young men of the church, interested both in the work of the Sunday School and of the church." Mrs. Mary Andre, as Superintendent of the Sunday School, reported 75 enrolled, not counting the young men of Dr. Newton's class. Mr. J. Y. Kennedy reported for the Layman's League.

### *Community Meeting of Protest*

There are no minutes available for the years 1910-1914. However in *River of Years* Dr. Newton himself tells of a call about 1912 to the People's Church of St. Paul, Minnesota. Here are his words:

"I went to spend a Sunday with the church, out of respect for the invitation. A day or so after my return, a voice over the telephone told me that there was to be a very important meeting in 'The Little Brick Church.' To my question asking what it was about I received no answer, except the time of the meeting and the hope that I would be good enough to attend. It was all very puzzling. When I arrived at the church, I found it packed and jammed with all sorts and conditions of people: a distinguished layman of the Methodist Church was presiding. They gave me a chair against the back wall of the church. It was a community meeting, called, apparently, to protest against my accepting the invitation to go to St. Paul, and urging me

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\* This paragraph was used on the membership card, referred to above.

not even to consider it. There were a number of speeches, some by Bohemian people, who made up perhaps a fourth of the population of the city—folk of high type, artistic, lovers of music, the best of good citizens, many of whom belonged to my church and were my good friends. I do not recall the order of the speeches or the names of most of the speakers. In fact I was too astonished at what was said, I did not recognize the man they described or the work they said he had done, and was doing; it was like a package delivered to the wrong address, or a premature obituary. When I was called upon at last, I could hardly speak at all—my voice was tear-laden and uncertain; but I did stammer out both my gratitude and my humility as best I could. It was an amazing expression of a city of friends; it lingers like a perfume in my heart. After such a meeting, of course, it was impossible for me to consider going to St. Paul.”

In January 1914 the church purchased the lot at the rear of the church building from John M. Grimm for \$4700, plus the interest thereon from October 24, 1913, when it was purchased by Mr. Grimm. This was the rear 46 feet that was deeded to F. J. Upton in 1882, thus returning to the church after 32 years. They were to sell a lot at 917 A Avenue West that Mr. S. H. Hartley had deeded to the church. Proceeds of this sale and rentals on the house on the rear lot were to be applied on the purchase.

### *Publication of Sermons and Lectures*

At the annual meeting in June 1914 the publication committee urged more printing. The Layman's League, under the leadership of Mr. Nixon, was mailing our 300 copies of each issue of pamphlets containing sermons and lectures to every state in the union and to foreign lands. Church membership stood at 348.

The minutes for the annual meeting of June 8, 1915, are unusually full and complete. The first report ever made by the Van Vechten Guild, named to honor Mrs. Ada and Mrs. Emma Van Vechten, was given by Mrs. Irving Emery. At the request of Dr. Newton and under the leadership of Zulina Severa it had been organized in April 1914, with the help of Hattie Allison, Nell Cherry, Helen and Blanche Collins, Helen Chandler, Jane Davis, Imogene Emery, Edith Garrison, Freda Higley, Josephine Krause and a few others,

“to care for young women not already in the Social Circle or the Younger Set. Twenty-four members have signed the constitution. The Guild has worked against odds for we were a band of women—mostly strangers—who had done but very little church work, if any. We had to become



acquainted and then find a field separate from yours. We need your hearty cooperation in all our endeavors and we assure you of our interest and support in whatever you undertake."

Mrs. Emery recalls the well-attended pancake lunches that the Guild served once a week and the project of promoting the hiring of a School Nurse in the city.

The Triad Club and the Younger Set united, with the motto,

"The kingdom of God means, not meat and drink, but justice, peace and joy, joy in a dance or joy in a jest, or joy in anything you have deserved to possess or that you are willing to share."

The Ladies' Social Circle announced through their treasurer, Mrs. M. E. Keech, total receipts of \$1223.46 for the year. The debt of the church was reported at \$4,152. The budget for 1915-16 was set at \$5,700. The Layman's League was authorized to continue the publication of the pamphlets of sermons and lectures. On behalf of the League, Mr. Nixon said that the demand had been great and letters of appreciation numerous. He also announced that the pamphlets were being reprinted by a London paper. At this same meeting Dr. Newton said,

"Recently I have had so many letters from 'shut-ins'; they represent a little bit of what I have been able to do in Cedar Rapids. You know what you do in your figures and facts, but I do not know much of what I do."

Total membership was now at 382 with an additional fourteen new members in June. The Sunday School reported 121 members plus the cradle roll. The subscription committee consisted of the President of the Board, Mr. C. D. Van Vechten; Treasurer, Mr. W. H. Stepanek; and Mrs. Andre. A committee on the debt was made up of George T. Hedges, Dr. Richard Lord, Joseph Mekota, F. F. Dawley and Walter L. Cherry. The music committee members were Edna Barrett Jackson, leader, Mr. Metcalf, tenor, Mr. Schaffer, bass, and others yet to be tried out. They planned to enlarge the music fund by vespers once a month when they would take up a silver collection.

### *Invitation to City Temple in London*

At the annual meeting of June 1916 Dr. Newton talked of his invitation to preach in the City Temple in London during July and of a call to its pastorate. He explained the circumstances which had led to the invitation. The situation had placed him in a state of uncertainty.

"What is to become of it, I do not know. I can never find on earth anywhere friends more loyal and more lovely, friends more eager and more gracious than the friends in Cedar Rapids and the Little Brick Church, and it is in this mood of profound perplexity that I shall sail

a week from next Saturday and think of you all the way over and ask you to think of me. And when you talk in your heart to the great Father of us all, ask what He would have me do. I will thank you and thank you."

In January 1917 the Trustees met to consider how long Dr. Newton could stay on in Cedar Rapids, to consider a successor and to adopt the following resolutions, drawn up by Mrs. Andre, Mr. Dawley and Mr. Cherry:

"Seldom is a congregation called upon to make so heart-breaking a sacrifice as we are making in the surrender of our beloved minister, Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, who leaves us to enter a wider field with greater opportunities of service.

"The ideals of freedom and friendship in religion which he has so ably taught have grown very dear to us and will always be enshrined in our hearts. We shall ever be grateful for the years of noble ministry which we have been granted.

"We pray that his work in the City Temple will be fruitful and that multitudes of heart-hungry, aspiring, wistful men and women will be given comfort, the assurance and the inspiration which it has been our privilege to receive."

In the little history of 1925 Dr. W. W. W. Argow wrote of Dr. Newton in these words:

"It is utterly impossible for anyone to describe the inimitable ministry of Mr. Newton. This is one of the open volumes in the history of Cedar Rapids and of Iowa, of which every citizen knows more than anyone can write."

### *Dr. Newton's Last Service*

In *River of Years* Dr. Newton himself describes his last service:

"My last service as minister of The Little Brick Church was very trying both for preacher and people. Eight years before, I had come to the city, unknown; I had worked quietly, without sensationalism and without sectarianism. In my sermons I had told the story of my heart—my faith, my hope; in my lectures I had shared my findings as a student of literature; I had touched all kinds of groups, toiling in behalf of the common good. The response was extraordinary; the church, if loosely organized, was a real fellowship—if I tried to name my friends in the church, in other churches, and outside of all churches, it would look like the City Directory. They had forgiven my mistakes and given me encouragement.

"There is something infinite in all partings, and I knew that I was looking into faces, many of which I would never see again on earth. The older people regarded the pastor and his wife as son and daughter; others, nearer my own age, a great company, had been chums and pals. All my people were my

personal friends—I loved each one, I had walked with many through deep, dark places. It was impossible for me to speak personally, my sermon would have been punctuated with sobs. My subject was ‘The Angel of a New Day,’ an attempt to forecast the changing vision of religious ideals in tangled, turbulent, stupendous days. My heart was aching, my voice was almost breaking. At the end, two lines from an old hymn flashed into my mind—nay, they were sent of God to meet my need—and became the benediction to a ministry to which I look back with gladness and gratitude:

“O spread Thy sheltering wings around,  
Till all our wanderings cease. Amen.”

### *The Coming of Dr. Harold B. Drew*

Dr. Newton was present at the parish meeting, April 30, 1917, when Dr. Harold B. Drew of Morristown, New Jersey, was unanimously elected as his successor. Dr. Newton at once took the opportunity to hand on his torch of leadership, so to speak, by urging the members to give their loyal support to the new minister. In his heart he well knew the faith and courage his successor would need, but he predicted the growing power and influence of the church, “whose principles and fellowship are so dear to all of us.” He also asked, while he was still a member of this church, that we follow out Dr. Drew’s suggestion that steps be taken toward the erection of a new church building. As a consequence Mr. J. Y. Kennedy moved that we instruct our Trustees to formulate a plan to raise funds for the building of a new church, a motion that was seconded and carried. The parish also voted to make the Newton family permanent members of this church.

Dr. Drew’s first service was June 10, 1917, just a few weeks after Dr. Newton’s final one. By December 2, 1918, he had died of the virulent influenza that took so many lives, having had hardly a year and a half to prove himself. Two members of the quartet choir also succumbed to the “flu” at this time. It was a great tragedy for our church and to all concerned. To give just a glimpse of the quality of Dr. Drew, here are his words to his new parish at the annual meeting on June 18, 1917, not more than a week after his first service:

“We are making history tonight, we are making history all of these days. There never has been a time when the world called to the church for leadership as it is calling today. A great many things which we thought absolutely proven in the past have crumbled about our feet in the past few years. We are living in a new world out of which we must build anew. There is a call for sane thinking and calm, deliberate action as there has not been in a century. What the church is going to be in a century is



going to depend on the manhood and womanhood of our own time as we accept and discharge our obligations. The future of a generation yet unborn is in our hands. And especially is this church making history. For ten years you have been working toward a goal, developing yourselves and your minister until today our minister stands speaking to the world. There is a greater responsibility with Dr. Newton in London than with Dr. Newton standing here.

"If men in business were handicapped as this church is handicapped, they would fail, but we are going to accomplish everything under God that can be accomplished. Any human institution must give expression to that which is within or die. We have our ideals. One of the finest things in church history is the little card (Dr. Newton's membership card) which we acknowledge as our aim. Those who come after us are going to read it in the history of Protestant Christianity, a great story here, and that card is going down as a classic. We have our ideal, what shall be the history? If we had the money in our hands for a new church, it could not well be accomplished in less than three years. It will take time, for we must determine what our work will be and what equipment will be necessary, for the one creed I hold is, 'It is not enough to be good, but be good for something.' Unless the church becomes good for something besides the Sunday morning sermon, it has sounded the death-knell. I deem it a very essential part of our work to encourage the work of the Sunday School and Sunday Evening Club, for on them depend the church of the future. Let us tonight, standing before the King of Kings face our task, for which we may die, if need be, but if we live, join our labors and carry it on to greater things."

Very encouraging reports were made at this meeting. The Ladies' Social Circle reported 83 members with 57 very active, and \$1,140.62 received. The Younger Set reported the most successful year in its history as to new members and money raised, \$955.72. The Van Vechten Guild had 33 members and receipts of \$423.73. The church debt stood at \$1,644.38. The Registrar reported 502 members, representing 308 families. The building committee thought that this was not a good time to consider building, but suggested paying off the debt by January 1, 1918, and then consolidating all funds available into a building fund nucleus. The Sunday Evening Club reported that its purpose was simply to become acquainted, with no dues, no membership and everyone invited.

At the annual meeting of June 5, 1918, Mr. Kennedy spoke of the disadvantages under which Dr. Drew had worked and his success in spite of them. Mr. Clarence N. Jenkins spoke of our past work, of our success during Dr. Newton's time and our loyalty to Dr. Drew. Dr. Drew spoke of the tribute that he felt was paid him to fill the pulpit of this church. He said no greater opportunity or honor could have come to him. He spoke of his appreciation of the many little things that had

been done for him and also of Sunday attendance. He said, after hearing the work of the church for the past year,

"I have been profoundly stirred tonight. I am more confident than ever that there shall be a church on this corner some day that shall be a great living spirit of Christianity, a church where men shall be brothers."

On December 2, 1918, full of shock and dismay, the Trustees sent the following cablegram to Dr. Newton:

"Dr. Drew died last Monday. We want you to come home." The opinion prevailed that it was possible to persuade Dr. Newton to accept the ministry of the church, so they appointed Mr. Dawley, Mr. Mekota and Mr. Van Vechten as a committee to try to get him back. Alas, Dr. Newton could not get away, but recommended a Dr. McClellan of Glasgow. On May 23, 1919, this cablegram came from London:

"McClellan visit July. Lecture and get acquainted. Love always, Newton."

### *Dr. Gelvin and the Community Church*

Here in the absence of records a curtain falls on the history of events, really from December 1918 to 1922. The records do state that George T. Hedges was president in 1918. We know that Dr. E. H. Gelvin finally succeeded Dr. Drew, early in the year 1920. During the year and a half of his ministry the church withdrew from the Iowa Universalist Convention to become an independent community church, becoming the Peoples Christian Church. Articles of Incorporation (which should have been re-incorporation) were filed September 8, 1920, stating,

"This corporation is formed for the purpose of conducting and maintaining religious services and worship in accordance with the forms and usages as adopted and recognized from time to time by the membership of said church and its Trustees."

This is followed, as before, by the duties and rights of the church and other organizational matters. It added, "Pecuniary profit is not the object of this association."

(Unwittingly the Trustees had formed a second corporation to exist along side of the one of 1875.)

Previous to the above, on June 15, 1920, a large delegation representing the Cedar Rapids Church at the Iowa Universalist Convention in session at Boone, Iowa, presented a petition to withdraw. The following statement was recorded on the abstract, July 9, 1920:

"Whereas, the membership of the First Universalist Church of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, represented to the Iowa Universalist Convention that, affiliated with such Cedar Rapids Church were a large number of persons who were not Universalists, and that it was the desire of said members

and their said affiliates to secure title and free and exclusive control of the following described church property . . . in the name of a religious organization non-denominational and independent in its purpose and free to call Universalist or other ministers to its pulpit . . . make its promissory note for \$10,000, due and payable in five years and bearing 5% interest per annum from July First, 1920, and secured by a mortgage on the property herein conveyed. Therefore, for the consideration above named, the Iowa Universalist Convention sell and convey to C. D. Van Vechten . . . as trustee all the interests of grantor."

Then Mr. Van Vechten gave a deed of the property to the "Peoples Church," "in performance of a trust and no money or consideration of value is paid therefor." (Here a third mistake had been made by naming the church "Peoples Church" instead of "Peoples Christian Church," thereby naming an organization that did not exist.)

This was all discovered March 9, 1929 when the church wished to close the mortgage with the Iowa Universalist Convention and transfer it to the American Unitarian Association. An affidavit, sworn to March 6, 1929, was made by Mrs. C. D. Van Vechten, Mrs. Irving C. Emery, Mrs. W. H. Stepanek, Mrs. W. E. Andre, Mr. H. S. Raymer and Mr. George T. Hedges to the effect that the First Universalist Church, The Liberal Christian Church and the Peoples Christian Church had always been operated and owned by the same organization, explaining that it had become popularly known as the Peoples Church.

To Mr. George C. Claassen this church is indebted for the happy solution of this knotty legal problem.

### *Deep Discouragement*

By the spring of 1921 there must have been a feeling of deep discouragement in the hearts of the leaders of this church. Seven representatives, namely John Redmond, president, Mary Andre, Emma J. Fordyce, J. G. McMasters, Mrs. W. H. McClintock, George Hedges and C. D. Van Vechten, met with seven representatives of the Congregational Church to try to work out a merger of the two organizations. They made a report at the annual meeting June 6, 1921, which was put on file, but has since been lost. Since no merger was ever accomplished, one would conclude that the discussions were fruitless.

### *Ministry of Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow*

Instead of losing its identity, however, the Peoples Christian Church called Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow at a parish meeting July 1, 1921. He came to Cedar Rapids from New York City, where he had spent three years in social and religious educational



work. Previous to that time he had for six years been pastor of the First Baptist Church at Lorraine, Ohio, near Cleveland. He had studied at a number of universities and seminaries and had received degrees from the University of Kentucky, Southern Baptist and New York University.

This was the beginning of a climb to new heights under an inspired and inspiring leader. There was a healthy activity again, as evidenced by the reports of the annual meetings. In 1922 the number of subscribers had increased from 87 to 160. The Younger Set, organized in 1907, reorganized under the name of the Newton Alliance. The treasurer, W. H. Stepanek, was made chairman of a new Subscription and Finance Committee. By 1924 Dr. Argow could report that 163 new members had joined the church since 1921. Dr. Argow appeared on the program of the Federation of Religious Liberals in New York City. He also began a series of evening lectures for the church and general public to consider "The Glorious Synthesis of Evolution." Thanks to the generosity of Mr. W. F. Severa, publication of sermons was also resumed, as in the days of Dr. Newton.

In the year 1923-24 the church offered a series of seven lectures, called the "Peoples University Course" in cooperation with the Extension Division of the State University of Iowa. The fundamental idea underlying the course was growth and development as an expression of the manner in which man has attained to his present stage. The following year a similar course was offered on the same theme and concerned "the origin and development of language, writing, art, music, religion, social and economic institutions and inter-nation relationships." For instance, Dean Edwin D. Starbuck lectured on "The Origin and Development of Religion."

### *Semicentennial of Laying of the Cornerstone*

The year 1925 was a gala one. From May 17 to 23 the church celebrated the semicentennial of the laying of the cornerstone in 1875. Dr. Argow prepared a brief history of the church as a souvenir booklet. A reunion banquet was held Thursday, May 21, at the Montrose Hotel, with 327 members and friends as guests. Preston Bradley was present as a featured speaker. During the semicentennial week there was also a program by the "Tuesday Evening Chorus," that pleased a large audience. In his "From the Minister's Desk" in the bulletin for Sunday, May 24, Dr. Argow wrote:

"Your minister is profoundly happy with the results, and withal truly grateful for the unstinted devotion that our members have so liberally

given, of their time and money to make our anniversary such an epoch-making event . . . We have achieved a sense of solidarity, a spirit of unity and a consciousness of objective we never had before . . . Forward, to the heights sublime, that is our challenge!"

Also during the semicentennial year several new members wrote short paragraphs entitled "Why I Have United With the Peoples Church." One, by Mr. Jay G. Sigmund, went in part as follows:

"I found in the Peoples Church what I had failed to find elsewhere—absolute freedom of thought, tolerance and fellowship with congenial people of all ages and from all walks of life mingling together in a common fellowship. After twenty-five years of staying away from churches almost entirely, I find myself glad to attend a church regularly where there are all the beauties of many religions blended into a harmonious fellowship and shared by a society of broadminded, soulful, truth-seeking, devout people."

Another was from the heart of Charles S. Svoboda:

"Being a Catholic by birth I was through with the church before I entered the University . . . I believed myself to be an atheist . . . There (in the Peoples Church) I found myself. The humanitarian ideas which were inculcated by my illustrious teacher, Masaryk, I found there, interpreted as religious impulses . . . So 'the old sinner,' after more than twenty-five years of staying away from church, is back again where he feels perfectly at home and indeed truly happy."

### *Remodeling of the "Little Brick Church"*

Even more significant than the semicentennial was the decision taken at the annual meeting in June to remodel and repair the church, in accordance with plans suggested by a "committee of 15," who found the building in poor condition. A letter in support of the plan came from Clarence N. Jenkins, a longtime and influential member, and whose father, L. E. Jenkins, an able cabinet-maker and charter member, had made the pews for this church and the pulpit. This committee was reduced to a "committee of seven" to carry on the work of renovation. To finance the project \$18,000 had been subscribed. They planned to borrow \$10,000 with those pledges as collateral.

On completion of the remodeling and rebuilding the committee reported as follows:

"We are under obligation to Messrs. Bruce McKay, Grant Wood, George Keeler and Mark Anthony for their suggestions as to design and their uncompensated interest in the project and practical assistance in meeting our problems. The exterior design and the interior beams are fundamentally those of Bruce McKay. Suggestions as to detail were received from the others mentioned." The committee added: "We are under special obligation to the devoted interest of our superintendent, Mr. H. H. Montillon, a member of this church, through whose energy,

foresight and mechanical efficiency we were able to complete the renovation of the church on time."

The Board of Trustees also passed a "resolution of gratitude to Mr. George L. Schoonover and Mr. George T. Wilhelm, of thanks for their self-sacrificing and unselfish service in time, skill, genius, effort and money, in the rebuilding of the church and that a copy be put in the permanent records so that we will forever be mindful of their labors."

It should also be noted that Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Severa paid for the tile roof and Mr. Wilhelm made the grille-work on the rostrum as well as the lanterns.

### *Death of C. D. Van Vechten*

January 5, 1926, marked the death of C. D. Van Vechten, who was first mentioned in the minutes of the annual meeting for May 1, 1878. Year after year he served in some official capacity as clerk, moderator, collector of funds or treasurer, right up to his death. The Board of Trustees drafted resolutions to preserve his memory in the records, which are quoted in part as follows:

"... We deem it fitting that we, with whom he worked for the building of the Peoples Church, should express the keen appreciation which we feel for his help in tireless work, generous substance and wise and selfless leadership and our respect and affection for him as a brother . . . We hereby express our sorrow for the great loss to the Peoples Church and the community and the personal loss of each of us . . ."

Two memorable services of the church year were introduced by Dr. Argow. One was the beautiful Christmas Candlelight Service, begun in 1924 with the help of the Cecilians, a group of singers from old Washington High School, and continued until 1958. The other was the "Church in the Woods," a five-thirty Sunday morning service held the last Sunday in June at the "big rock" in Bever Park, and followed by a breakfast. The collection at this service was sent to Camp Good Health.

For several years the popular soup luncheons, served by the Ladies' Social Circle each Friday for twenty-five weeks during the winter, brought a variety of citizens to the church. Attendance was good as 25 cents secured a generous serving of home-made vegetable soup, pie and coffee. In the winter of 1927-1928, 4600 people were served.

### *Affiliation With the American Unitarian Association*

By 1927 the problems of an independent church were becoming apparent and lively discussions of affiliating with the American Unitarian Association were begun. Mr. Clarence N. Jenkins closed a discussion with the words, "Let's hear Reese." So on June 15, 1928, there was a general meeting of the members for a conference with Dr. Curtis W. Reese, President of Lombard



College and secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference. It was in the form of a round-table discussion and was recorded in full in a stenographic report that is still available. Here are some of the important points brought out by Dr. Reese in answer to questions from the members:

"I have always been considerably jealous of my liberty. That is why I am a Unitarian. I am interested in the Unitarian Fellowship solely because it seems to me to be a fairly good rallying ground for religious liberals of various types and points of view and this I believe to be its proper function.

"What must an affiliated church give up? Nothing! Every local church is totally and absolutely independent of state, district and national organizations. This is the typical old-fashioned congregational form of organization familiar to the Baptists, Congregationalists, Disciples and others. The one act that constitutes affiliation is simply voting to affiliate and by making an annual contribution to its missionary fund—whatever the churches feel inclined to contribute. There is no credal test; there is no official Unitarian body of doctrine.

"There are five points that have been used a great deal in Unitarian literature: the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the leadership of Jesus, salvation by character and the progress of mankind onward and upward together. These same points are used by the Universalists. There are no doctrinal tests whatsoever for the individual Unitarian or for the local Unitarian Church."

At least five advantages of joining this free movement were brought out. A very appealing one was the willingness of the American Unitarian Association to lend the church ten thousand dollars, interest free, but expecting a reduction of the debt by five per cent a year.

On June 22 a follow-up meeting was held at which Mr. Claassen offered the following resolution:

"Resolved that this Peoples Church, a corporation of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, affiliate itself with the American Unitarian Association on the basis and terms submitted to us by Dr. Curtis Reese on June 15, 1928, as contained in the stenographic record taken at said time; and that we retain the name 'Peoples Church' and complete property control."

This was seconded by Mr. Roy Curaray and carried by ballot with 66 votes in favor and 3 opposed.

The mortgage to the Iowa Universalist Convention was released by them March 19, 1929 and was taken over by the A. U. A. However in March 1930 the Trustees found that the church was not yet considered a member of the A. U. A. (1) as formal application for membership had not been made and (2) as we were not a contributing organization. In reply to an application and a contribution, a letter from the A. U. A. was received March 12, 1930, admitting the church to full membership.

As an outgrowth of this union with the A. U. A., which laid

a solid foundation for the strength and growth of the organization, a letter was received March 6, 1930, from former pastor, Dr. W. A. Pratt, stating that he wished to leave money in his will to some firmly grounded liberal institution. In fact he offered to leave the church \$20,000, on condition that the name Peoples Church would be changed to All Souls Unitarian Church. Here is a quotation from Dr. Pratt himself, about the name he suggested:

"The suggestion All Souls Unitarian Church was made because it is a comprehensive, dignified name and, associated with Unitarianism, links together a broad, liberal theology with all that the name Unitarian has stood for in American letters and history and the natural heritage we love of a free man in a free church in a free state."

At their meeting March 18, instead of making arrangements to submit this proposition at once to the membership, the Board of Trustees laid it on the table. On May 1, 1930, Dr. Pratt, through his lawyer, withdrew his offer.

In 1927 at the annual meeting it was voted to restrict board members, but not the president, to one term of three years, eligible, however, for re-election after a lapse of one year. In 1927 Dr. Argow had the enriching experience of a trip to Europe. The Gazette was publishing frequently a feature called "Outspoken Thoughts," contributed by Dr. Argow.

The Business Women's Club of the church had had the exclusive sale of Dr. Argow's inspirational book, *Beyond*, 650 copies of which they had sold. In the "Foreword" Dr. Argow wrote:

"The contents of this volume appeared originally on the weekly calendar of the Peoples Church. It will therefore be apparent to the reader that each is an attempt to catch the moods of the seasons as they impinged upon me. Many of them, in fact nearly all, were written amid the hurried life of a busy ministry, where many more important things had to be done. However, if they will help a life here and there to feel at home in this mystery-enchanted world of ours, I shall indeed be recompensed."

In the fall of 1929 the Board of Trustees asked Mr. Roy E. Curray to take charge of raising a thousand dollars to pay off accumulated debts, including that for a furnace. He asked about 30 members and secured \$1,030.00. Mr. Curray said that the success of the drive was due largely to the high regard and kindly feeling of all contributors for Dr. Argow. It is not surprising, however, that Mr. Curray became treasurer in 1930 and held that position, except for four years (1953-57), until 1959. Other able treasurers were Mr. W. H. Stepanek, eleven years, and Mr. Fred Fluegel, four years.

Dr. Argow was invited in 1930 to deliver a series of six lectures before the Layman's League at the Isles of Shoals in

July and this comment was added, "That our pastor should have been selected out of the leaders of 450 Unitarian Churches is indeed significant; we have every reason to feel proud indeed of our pastor and the national recognition that has come to him."

### *Death of Last Surviving Charter Member*

During Dr. Argow's pastorate Mrs. Ai A. Jacobs, the last survivor of the charter members, passed away and was memorialized by resolutions, parts of which are recorded here as a symbol of recognition for all of our charter members:

"... We, the Board of Trustees and the Peoples Church . . . note with deep regret the passing of the last charter member of our beloved church . . . We are deeply conscious of the faithful and unselfish service Mrs. Jacobs gave in the younger days of our organization's history when helpers were few and discouragements many . . . We value highly (her) beautiful spirit and unlimited idealism, knowing full well that she has left us a noble heritage and a spiritual benediction, for which we are sincerely grateful . . . A copy of these resolutions (is to be) incorporated in the permanent records of the church, that future comers may know of our gratitude to the builders, into whose labors we have entered."

In 1928 Mr. Clarence N. Jenkins passed away. As early as 1893 he was listed as clerk of the parish. Dr. Argow and Jay Sigmund were to write "a fitting testimonial and an expression of our sympathy and our grief over the passing of our oldest and most revered member." A copy was to be sent to his wife and son, and to be spread on the minutes, but it was not preserved.

The church held a Mission Service, in the fall of 1928, which lasted a week and two Sundays, with Dr. Horace Westwood of the Unitarian Mission League as leader. During the mission-week a dinner was held at the Roosevelt Hotel with 125 attending. Eighteen meetings were held and 3,210 persons addressed. Here is a quotation from a letter to the Layman's League as a report of the mission:

"We found him to be clear in his thinking, fearless in the analysis and presentation of vital religious subjects, combined with the warmth of a contagious and genial personality."

One of the serious and vexing problems of a church organization is inadequate support and non-payment of pledges on the part of the membership. In 1929, when the active membership was listed at 319, Mrs. Andre made a frank report of the financial problems as follows:

Out of 207 contributing members, 72 gave \$10 to \$15 a year, 37 gave \$5 to \$10, leaving 98 members to carry the burden of financing the church budget. Various church organizations



contributed also to the budget, the Ladies' Social Circle giving as much as \$800. This shows that there were many able and hardworking members in this Circle, but Mrs. Blanche Small was the very essence of them all, for years an outstanding leader and devoted worker. To quote further from the minutes: "Mr. Redmond, who as usual makes these meetings a delight to us all, thought that the best way to help Mary Andre was to organize another Social Circle, to which Mrs. Andre replied, 'No organization should have to work as hard as the Social Circle did to raise money for an operating budget for a church organization. It should come solely from subscriptions.' "

Dr. Argow told the membership that the future of the organization depended upon whether the members were willing to spend time and energy, to roll up their sleeves and work.

### ***Resignation of Dr. Argow***

After nine years of ministry here, Dr. Argow resigned to accept a call to the May Memorial Church of Syracuse, New York. About ten years later he became pastor of the historic Unitarian Church in Baltimore, Maryland, where William Ellery Channing preached his historic sermon on Unitarian Christianity May 5, 1819, and where Dr. Argow is pastor at this time.

From the *Gazette* of June 9, 1930, are taken the following paragraphs:

"A profound thinker and constructive leader, the Rev. Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow, whose written and spoken words have exerted a cultural and ennobling influence in the community during a pastorate of nearly a decade at the Peoples Church here, will face Eastward to new fields of service in the fall.

"During his nine years here Dr. Argow has gained renown for his positive stand on the outlawry of war in international disputes. It was he who in an Armistice Day address from the pulpit in 1922 launched the first bolt against strife between nations in the local movement against war.

"His spoken words expound premises from which men may reason deeply and this ability has placed him in demand as a speaker. During the last year he has given 42 sermons and 67 lectures. His written words have been followed devotedly by thousands, who have read his regular Sunday articles 'Outspoken Thoughts,' on the editorial page of the Sunday *Gazette and Republican*, and his volume *Beyond*, a series of inspirational articles. He is a contributing editor of *Unity* and *The Liberal*, both published in Chicago. During the last year he has written 170 articles.

"During his career in Cedar Rapids, Dr. Argow has been active in many organizations. He has been prominent in the International Study Club and is a member of the Board of the Linn County Chapter of the Red Cross.

"He has also devoted considerable time to Masonic activities, being a member of Crescent lodge No. 25 A. F. and A. M., Trowel chapter No. 49 R. A. M., Palestine Council No. 27 R. and S. M. and Apollo Com-

mandery No. 26, Knights Templar. For several years he was chaplain of Crescent lodge and was a member of the Masonic service committee."

The following letter to the membership, taken from a bulletin of the church for Sunday, June 22, 1930, will summarize Dr. Argow's ministry here in his own words:

"Today there comes to a close what for me has been one of the sweetest and happiest relationships I have ever known. Ours has been more than an official relationship between minister and church membership, held together by legal contract. Indeed, ours has been a genuine friendship, touching the eternal springs of the heart, wherein each understood and loved the other with fidelity and appreciation that was nothing short of divine. What a wealth of memories these years have deposited in my heart! What an inspiration they shall be in the onward flow of the years!

"Permit me to tell you of the membership, and the many friends who have found here inspiration and help, what a joy, yea and what a privilege it was for me to minister in this place. You have been kind, considerate, patient, tolerant, forgiving and whole-heartedly responsive to all that I tried to do in my imperfect way. Even so do I bespeak my appreciation to the citizens of Cedar Rapids for the sympathetic response they have given my efforts.

"We may take not a little pride in the visible results our labors have accomplished. During this time we have remodeled our building, all of which has been paid; 333 friends have been added to our membership roll; our average attendance has increased 164 per cent; our subscribers have increased 146 per cent; approximately \$115,000 have passed through the various treasuries; all societies and organizations have grown in membership and financial strength. As for the record of my own work, I take great pride in telling it to you herewith: I preached 378 sermons, delivered 567 addresses, conducted 261 funerals, married 108 couples, christened 42 children and adults, wrote 1,269 articles, wrote 3,790 official letters, interviewed and visited 6,536 persons, spoke to a total of 394,000 people, and traveled 63,789 miles to keep appointments. Surely here is a record of which any church may be justly proud!

"So much for the past! What of the future? Never has our work been in such a splendid condition, physically, financially and spiritually as it is today. We possess the consciousness of a high mission, and a loyalty to the church as never before. We are standing a-tip toe, anxiously waiting to press forward to achievements that will surpass our fondest hopes. Indeed, the best is yet to be!

"And now may I ask you individually to be patient until another man arrives. Keep intact your loyalty and enthusiasm during this transition period. Encourage and sustain the various officers in their difficult tasks, and remember me not as a standard by which to measure another man, but ever and always as a friend who tried oft and failed much, and whose love shall always be with you and this glorious work."

### *An Interim Year*

Dr. Herbert Martin, Professor of Philosophy at the State University of Iowa, filled our pulpit during the fall of 1930 and the spring of 1931. At the end of this year the secretary wrote him:

"By resolution a vote of thanks was tendered to you by the congrega-

tion for the effective and inspiring sermons you have given us during the past months. Many of us feel that your relation with the church has been a wonderful experience in our lives and has given us a broader outlook and a deeper understanding of the problems of living."

Of course Dr. Martin had his obligations at the University and could in no way assume any of the duties of a pastor or the leadership of the church activities. This was a period when the strength of the lay-leadership was tested to the full. When Dr. Argow returned in March 1931 for a brief visit and a sermon, he commended the church for "the most unusual way in which the entire fellowship had remained loyal and steadfast during a most trying year."

The pulpit committee had been investigating promising candidates all year. They were "looking for a young man with promise of growth, a man who would make a favorable personal appeal to the congregation and the community, but pulpit power would be a characteristic eagerly sought." They decided to commend favorably to the church Rev. Melvin L. Welke, associated at the time with Dr. William Elliott of Portland, Oregon. He was a graduate of the University of Chicago and concurrently with his work at the University had taken the course at the Meadville Theological School. He was awarded a scholarship which enabled him to study for one year at Oxford University in England. The membership voted to call him May 10, 1931.

### ***Rev. Melvin L. Welke's Pastorate***

At the installation service November 11, Rev. Sydney B. Snow preached the sermon. Rev. Charles H. Lyttle gave the charge to the minister, Mr. M. S. Hallman, vice-president of the church, gave the Right Hand of Fellowship, Rev. R. B. Bragg brought greetings from the Western Unitarian Conference, Mr. John Redmond, longtime president, gave the Welcome to the Church, and Rev. Judson, president of the Ministerial Association, expressed a Welcome to the Community.

Rev. Welke's ministry coincided with the years of the great depression. Of course the church was seriously affected at once, especially financially in the non-payment of pledges. There was a concerted effort to reduce expenses to a minimum, beginning with the salary of the minister. Dr. Pratt offered to pay the expense of the organist for the rest of the year. All organizations, including the Board of Trustees, were asked to meet in private homes, to save light and heat in "times like these." In 1933 the Ladies' Social Circle with 46 members contributed \$200 to the support of the church; the Van Vechten



Guild with 49 members gave \$328.40; the Business Women's Club gave \$100; the Newton Alliance with 20 members gave \$50. Mr. Walter Allison, at one of the Board meetings, gave them a sort of surprise package, drawing out of his pocket one by one three bank-books, marked "Education Fund," "The Peoples Voice," and the "Rebuilding Fund," with a total of \$368.46 to add to the General Fund. The old house, located on the rear 46 feet and far more a source of expense than of income, was sold to a wrecker. This cutting-to-the-bone type of financial struggle was representative of all the tragic depression years.

Dr. Richard Lord, a member of the Board of Trustees, died April 3, 1932. Because he had been, through the years, "a great help to the Peoples Church, a faithful worker and an honest friend," resolutions were framed and adopted by the Board, commending "his radiant personality and his deep sense of things religious . . . the fidelity of his trusteeship, the wisdom of his counsel and the quality of his devotion to the many tasks he has undertaken . . ."

On the constructive side the Men's Club, the Friday Supper Club, the School of Religion, the College Young People, the Young Unitarians for high school age, the Boy Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls were all flourishing. The Church-in-the-Woods was still a part of the services. The hymnal, "Hymns of the Spirit," was adopted with a successful campaign, under the direction of Mr. Termohlen, to sell these books to the membership, to be marked as either in memory of (with the name of some loved one) or presented to the church by (with name of the donor). Arnold Pyle, a young Cedar Rapids artist, designed the little altar in the Social Room for the Sunday School, as a window inset. It was constructed by Ludlow Crane as only a skilled and devoted master craftsman could and was painted by Mr. Welke. It was dedicated October 1, 1939, by the School of Religion. On the altar were placed low pewter candlesticks with tall white candles. A large pewter offertory plate and a bowl for flowers completed the altar appointments. A monthly bulletin, the "Informant," turned out to be a valuable and successful publication, enjoyed as a readable and artistic piece of printing and printed on our own printing press, which was sold in 1944. Mr. Claassen, as president, expressed appreciation of Mr. Curray's fine services as treasurer, Mr. Hallman for his snappy financial campaign, Miss Pritchett for the music, Dr. Pratt for supporting the music fund, Mr. Garrison, Mr. Thurman, Mrs. Mahannah for their earnest work as members of

a group that does things. Then a rising vote of thanks was made for Mr. Claassen's leadership in discouraging times.

In 1939 Rev. Welke preached a sermon entitled "Our Church's Seventy Years," counting the founding date of 1869 rather than the date of the laying of the cornerstone, as had been done at the semicentennial in 1925.

By the summer of 1939 it was necessary to make repairs. Mr. Irving Garrison, chairman of the House Committee, was general supervisor in charge of the redecoration and repairs of the church. Miss Nell Cherry was chairman of the color committee with Miss Ethel Shean and Mr. Welke as members. Results were noted in the minutes: "The interior of the church is nice again—bright and attractive, and they deserve our gratitude and our thanks for their work."

In 1937 Mrs. Andre and Mr. Vernon Barta prepared a resolution for the Board of Trustees, to mark the loss of Mr. James M. Shields, another valued member. It was read to the Board, adopted and ordered spread on the minutes. The text is as follows:

"It is with deep sorrow that we note the passing from our midst of a member whose radiant personality brought comfort and joy to our lives. James M. Shields loved his friends with devotion, ever striving to bring smiles to faces and happiness to their hearts. His was the ministry of rollicking humor, brought to his friends in spite of physical troubles and suffering. We shall miss his warm handclasp, his laughter and his ready wit, but in our minds and hearts his memory will ever remain, a source of inspiration and courage."

In March 1940 Mr. Welke closed his ministry of nine years to accept a call to the First Unitarian-Congregational Church of Cincinnati, Ohio, a church that had celebrated its centennial several years before, to take effect by April 15. In "The Informant," Mr. Welke published his own statement of his pastorate:

"In laboring thus for nine years many intimate and strong bonds of friendship have been formed. Already thoughts of parting from dear friends, bring sadness, which mingles with feelings of anticipation and adventure. The church has done much through the years to test and mold its ministers into higher caliber and Mr. Welke is glad to have shared in that experience. And now upon the threshold of farewell he thanks all who have contributed in many ways to the on-going of this church of liberal religion in Cedar Rapids. May their vision and sympathy be wide, their courage strong, and their love deep and abiding for the future."

### ***Rev. R. W. Gilbert as Pastor***

The church was fortunate to secure Rev. Rudolf W. Gilbert of Bloomington, Indiana, chosen from nine candidates, to come as pastor in September 1940. Iowa-born, he attended the Uni-

versity of Iowa, but graduated from Grinnell in 1931. He took his theological training at Meadville Theological School. He had been for four years minister of the Unitarian Church in Bloomington. He had been under the tutelage of Dr. Herbert Martin, who had so ably served us in our great need.

The formal installation of Rev. Gilbert took place on Sunday, October 20. Dr. Herbert Martin preached the Installation Sermon with Rev. Evans A. Worthly of Iowa City giving the prayer and charge to the congregation. Dr. Charles E. Snyder of Davenport gave the Charge to the Minister and the Welcome to the Iowa Unitarian Conference, while Dr. James B. Hodgson of Coe College expressed a Welcome to the Community. At the bottom of the Order of Service were these words:

"This Church practices Union, has no creed, seeks to make religion as intelligent as science, as appealing as art, as vital as the day's work, as intimate as home, and as inspiring as love."

Mr. Gilbert at once began looking for ways to reduce expenses, such as mimeographing "The Informant" and reducing the heating bill. He was taking up his duties in a very promising way, when in January 1941 he discovered that he was seriously ill with tuberculosis and had to enter the hospital at Oakdale. The president, Mr. Claassen, said to the church: "It has come as a blow to the family and the church and will have to be met with courage and Christian fortitude."

The Board of Trustees granted Mr. Gilbert a leave of absence with his contracted salary and then at his suggestion he was to fill the pulpit each Sunday by a substitute. The Board expressed loyalty to him and he responded with a letter of gratitude for the opportunity given him by the congregation to recover his health.

Later in the year Rev. Gilbert wrote:

"It is an ill wind that bloweth no man good. But we must know how to trim our sails to use even an ill wind. However it was not an ill wind that brought to Cedar Rapids Sydney B. Snow, Charles Lyttle, James L. Adams, Edwin Wilson, Charles P. Connolly, Albion R. King, Lon R. Call, Evans Worthley, and from the community, James B. Hodgson and Harry M. Gage. Then there was our good friend, on whom we might confer some such title as Honorary Minister, Herbert J. Martin. Mrs. Gilbert and I are very proud to have helped set the sails to bring these men to you.

"I have been happy to know that you have been taking advantage of these spiritual and intellectual treats. One person wisely remarked that this has given us of the Peoples Church the feeling that we belong. We no longer feel that we are an outpost on the fringe of Unitarian activity. We are a part of a significant movement. We are important. I might add that many of these men have returned to their respective circles with an added respect for the Cedar Rapids Church. They have said



as much. I am glad we were able to bring several of these men on successive Sundays. This gave you an opportunity to know them better, and they came to feel more at home among you."

The secretary, Grace Shields, wrote that Mr. Gilbert had been cheered through his illness by reports of the sustained attendance and interest. She added:

"The members of the church are grateful to Mrs. Gilbert, who has so graciously, untiringly and effectively given time, thought and energy in keeping the wheels running smoothly and administering to this congregation."

At the annual meeting of 1941 Rev. Gilbert was re-elected. He announced that the church would open Sunday, September 7, and that he would preach every other Sunday; the alternate Sunday would be supplied by a minister of the Unitarian faith.

The Wayside Pulpit, an unattractive wooden structure, erected in the '30's at the southwest corner of the church, supporting a glassed-in display case for notices and quotations, was removed and the west front window was to be fitted for notices to match the window on the east front, when funds were available. The choir robes were being paid for also. The Sunday Evening Forum, a discussion group for adults, was reported as enjoyable and stimulating.

For the annual meeting of June 2, 1942, Rev. Gilbert wrote a letter of appreciation of the "graciousness of the visiting ministers and of our own laymen, of the loyalty and support of the congregation, the lack of any note of defeatism and the self-reliant enthusiasm of all concerned, in performing effectively and well the various tasks. It is with confidence and faith that I look forward to being with you in the fall."

While Mr. Gilbert was a fine man and would undoubtedly have made a good minister for the church, had he been in good health, this illness, that came within two months after his formal installation, with the consequent inability to preach and do pastoral work, proved a severe handicap to the church, particularly during the second year of his pastorate. Continued use of supply ministers did not hold old members or attract new prospects so that it became increasingly difficult to raise the money for Mr. Gilbert's salary.

By the end of June Rev. Gilbert gave the Trustees his letter of resignation in which he said in part:

"Understanding fully and in order to relieve the feeling of uncertainty relative to my being able to resume the duties of my position by early September, and on the advice and encouragement of denominational officials to take the next year to effect a full and complete recovery of

my health, I hereby reluctantly and with deep regret, tender my resignation—to take effect July 31, 1942.”

The trustees moved to accept this resignation and to extend his salary to September First.

### *Another Period of Discouragement*

It is easy to imagine the depressing frustration of this situation. A substantial number of members were discouraged and were willing to give up the fight and abandon the church. Again the church had to depend upon pulpit guests. On October 20, Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow came to fill the pulpit, arriving from Natick, Massachusetts, where he had assisted at the installation of his son, Waldemar Argow, sixth in a direct line in the Argow family to have entered the ministry.

Reminiscent of the low point of morale in 1921, another movement was under way to unite with the Congregational Church, “for the purpose of strengthening both denominations.” Mr. M. S. Hallman had prepared a paper, stating both the pros and cons of such a merger, for the meeting of our committee, consisting of Mr. Curray, Mr. Saxton, Mr. Hallman, Miss Grace Low and Miss Shields; so the president asked him to preside. Again, as twenty years before, this “Union Now” movement was abortive. No joint committee meeting was ever held. The Board of Trustees, on the contrary, gathered faith and courage and again appointed a pulpit committee.

This committee ran into many difficulties, the most serious being that many ministers had gone into the war as chaplains. At the close of Dr. Martin’s sermon, April 4, 1943, a meeting of the congregation was held to consider extending a call to Rev. George W. Marshfield. He was thirty-one, had been educated at the University of Pittsburgh and held a Bachelor of Divinity degree from the Chicago Theological Seminary. For four years he had been executive secretary of the Y. M. C. A. student program of social, recreational, religious and service activities. He was also a member of the Pasadena Council of Religious Education, a service which included addresses to school, church and community organizations. He was active out there in Unitarian and Universalist groups, speaking to a number of churches of these denominations. In 1943 he was working with the Detroit Y. M. C. A. in religious activities for young people. He was accepted by the Fellowship Committee of the A. U. A. as a Unitarian minister. This was to be his

first pastorate. There was only one dissenting vote in deciding to call him.

In the accustomed Easter letter of April 1943 the Board of Trustees said:

"We are looking forward with confidence and satisfaction that the church will be well served by Rev. George W. Marshfield. We feel that he is a man of unusual industry and that his talent for organization will result in a healthy revival of all of the functions of the church."

### ***Rev. Marshfield's Brief Pastorate***

After Easter the church was closed until Rev. Marshfield came to preach in June. One of his first sermons was based on the Peoples Church Covenant, that had been adopted in the late '20's:

"Love is the spirit of this church and service is its law. This is our great covenant: To dwell together in peace, to seek truth in love, and to help one another."

The services were held in the auditorium in June and in the church parlors in July.

During this year of search for a pastor, the annual meeting had been postponed until September. Grace Shields resigned as secretary after 15 years of faithful service. Mr. Claassen, who had been president since 1933 and a very able one in difficult years, also resigned. Under the adverse circumstances it took considerable vision and courage on the part of Allan Thurman to accept the presidency of the Board of Trustees at that time, and for a number of years following that time it took a great deal of courage, imagination and effort to raise the necessary funds and to keep the members optimistic enough to see conditions in their true light.

In December the Board accepted the resignation of Rev. Marshfield to be effective January 2, 1944. Some wanted to close the church during the interim, but Mr. Thurman sided with the majority, saying that a continuity should be thought of.

### ***Call to Rev. Waldemar Argow***

By February the Board had corresponded with Rev. Waldemar Argow in Natick, Massachusetts, had secured his interest in coming here and the congregation had voted to call him as our minister. In a letter to the church March 29, 1944, Mr. Thurman wrote,

"It is with a feeling of confidence that I say to you that I believe this marks the beginning of a great new era for our church."

And to quote from Rev. Argow's letter to the church of the same date:

"I predict that within the next five years we can restore the church



to its former position as the liberal religious center of Cedar Rapids, and as a powerful influence in the lives of its people and of the community . . . There is a popular song about the war called, 'We Did It Before and We Can Do It Again.' How is that for a motto for the next couple of years? . . . I hope you will join me in thinking and planning for our future work, and that you share my deep-seated conviction that great and rewarding days lie ahead for our church. I believe this and I believe it with enthusiasm."

### *Renewed Activity in 1944*

The spring of 1944 became a period of renewed activity, preparing for the coming of Waldemar Argow. They set a budget goal of \$5,000 in contrast to some \$3,200 for 1943-44. The kitchen, minister's study and the coal room were to be renovated. A committee for reopening the Sunday School was appointed, members being Myra Willis, Mrs. Lichtenstein and Mrs. J. Y. Kennedy. The annual meeting in May was held a week early so as to talk over the financial needs before launching the drive for funds. Rev. Argow wrote a very strong letter to accompany the president's call to the annual meeting, emphasizing how important and necessary is a dynamic financial start and how crucial the year 1944-45 would be. He concluded with these words: "The Peoples Church is worth rebuilding. This is the beginning of the job."

In Waldemar Argow's letter to the congregation of September 5, 1944, at the end of the church vacation, he said he felt that he was coming back home after an absence of 15 years. The point of his letter was for us to get off to a good start by having a fine congregation on September 10, the opening Sunday. To quote:

"The Peoples Church is not primarily a building or an organization. It is three things: (1) people, (2) ideas, (3) the spirit of drive that motivates the first two. For myself I am committed whole-heartedly to the proposition that we can make this the most important church in Cedar Rapids, not so much in terms of numbers as in meaning, influence and what it does to human character. The purpose of this church is to make you and me better human beings; to lift our eyes to the mountains, and to lead our footsteps there, so that, when we have passed, the world will be a little finer and more beautiful than it was before. Thus to help to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth—this is what it means to be a religious man or woman."

There was a new atmosphere of drive and purpose at the meeting of the Board of Trustees in September. They voted appreciation of Mr. Small's work in redecorating, especially the study, and of the help of the Van Vechten Guild and the Ladies' Social Circle for funds that partially paid for the redecorating. Mr. Argow asked for removable letters on the bulletin board, a monthly calendar and a promotional list of members

and friends of the church. He said that our church school would never be large; that we should strive for quality, not quantity; that the quality of the teachers was most important. He proposed book-nights to be followed by a social hour.

Waldemar Argow was formally installed as minister on Sunday, November 12, at a beautiful service. His father, Dr. Waldemar W. Argow, was here to preach the Installation Sermon. Others taking part were Rev. Evans A. Worthley and Dr. Herbert Martin of Iowa City, Rabbi Schaalman, Dr. Robert Little of the First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jacobs of Cedar Rapids, and, on behalf of the American Unitarian Association, Dr. Charles E. Snyder of Davenport. There was also a letter of greeting from Dr. Joseph Fort Newton. Then immediately following, a reception was held in the social rooms to welcome the new minister, the guest speakers and Dr. and Mrs. Argow.

### *The Uphill Struggle*

Grueling spade-work went on, by the minister, the lay-leaders and the organizations. Mr. Jack Andre made the lettering for the bulletin board and Mr. Walter Allison made and painted the boards for the letters and also the window frames. Mrs. Andre made a permanent loan of a typewriter to the church. There was to be a lecture by Rev. Preston Bradley of Chicago February 22, with proceeds from the lecture to apply on the church debt. Mr. Argow proposed an expenditure of \$6 a month on advertising in the *Gazette* to publicize sermons and book-nights. A nursery during the morning service was arranged for children nine years of age and younger.

Church organizations were active in contributing to the war-effort. The Social Circle was collecting clothing and at the end of three months had sent in one hundred pounds to the Unitarian Service Committee in Chicago and 250 pounds by the end of the year. The Van Vechten Guild was in charge of a project to send the Unitarian inspirational booklet, *Think on These Things*, to all church members in the service. The following, from a letter from one such boy in service, speaks for itself:

"Another purpose of this letter is to thank you and through you, the Guild, for sending that splendid little book, which carries so much of value between its covers. I read from it often after retiring and not always to myself. The fellows in our section derive as much enjoyment and satisfaction from its pages as I do, and that's more than a little, believe me."

Mr. Argow's report of his activities during the month of

May included speeches at all luncheon clubs and at the Western Unitarian Association at Hinsdale, and also mentioned his election to the presidency of the Cedar Rapids Radio Council.

At the annual meeting in May, 1945, seventeen new members were reported. The church had sent \$750 to the A. U. A. in Boston as the year's payment on the mortgage, which was still large after 15 years of debt. The Van Vechten Guild had served 1200 sandwiches to service-men passing through Cedar Rapids. As of April 30, the total Sunday collections were \$864.23, the Preston Bradley lecture had netted \$234.36, and the Easter offering was \$499.62. "To conclude," wrote the secretary, "it has been one of the most profitable years the Peoples Church has seen for a long time."

Speaking to this annual meeting, Mr. Argow said,

"We have to decide on our role. Our church cannot survive as an ordinary Protestant Church. It cannot survive as an ordinary Unitarian Church. We must continue to enlarge our activities. This church must capitalize itself to the community as a church that is awake. Talks by the minister to outside groups help to create a favorable impression of the church. Series of sermons on related subjects of broad, general interest help attendance, which fluctuates in direct proportion to the sermon subject. Book-nights have brought out people in direct competition with radio and movies. The minister has a job of promotion to do, which means working nights with other groups. This is the reason for 102 speaking engagements—to keep the church before the public. This may mean less parish calls, pleasant as they may be."

The difficult climb continued. A new committee was formed in 1945, "The Social Action Committee," with Miss Jaroslava Holub as chairman, and explained as follows:

"The purpose of the committee is to help acquaint our members with various important social problems through lectures, forums, and in similar ways. Because it will serve as a means of implementing many of the principles we talk about, this venture might become one of the most important phases of our church work."

Their first project was a lecture by Mr. Rhys J. Davies of England, followed by one in May by Kirby Page.

On the physical side of church up-keep was a decision to convert from coal and oil to city steam at a cost of \$1,932.21, with a special campaign that totaled \$1,867.50. As to innovations, it was decided to run an advertisement in the *Gazette* for some weeks, to have a display table for Unitarian publications, to organize a calling committee to help the minister, to shift to a monthly system of ushers, and to have the Church School, still very small, at 11 o'clock during the church service. There were picnic suppers; a young married group was meeting



each fourth Sunday evening; a new Young Peoples Group had been formed, led by Fiona Kennedy.

By May 1946 Mr. Argow's sermon, entitled "What Is Liberal Religion?" had attracted such attention that 1200 copies were mimeographed, 500 being requested by the A. U. A. Earlier in the year a sermon series on the World's Living Religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Mohammedanism, had attracted at least 200 each Sunday. Mr. Argow had made 86 speeches in town plus some outside. He proposed continued growth as our watchword.

In the minutes, Miss Elfrieda Metz, our assistant treasurer, was commended as an Unsung Heroine, for it was to her that much of the fine financial work was due. As Mrs. Carberry she was still serving up to 1959.

### *Tribute to Mrs. Andre*

Another church heroine was Mrs. Mary Andre, a leader in the church from the time of Dr. Newton's ministry. Though she was superintendent of the Sunday School for 14 years, she was especially prominent and valued in the financial affairs of the church. Hardly any project of importance in the life of this church failed to get her sympathy and active help. All of this was in addition to heavy civic responsibilities. She had been for years an elementary school principal and served as the first woman member of the Cedar Rapids Board of Education. She was a devoted member of the Library Board, an untiring worker for the founding of Camp Good Health and the first president of the Public Health Nursing Service. In the '20's Mrs. Andre was a strong advocate of our identification and affiliation with the American Unitarian Association. In the '40's she was stricken with a devastating illness that kept her bedridden for 14 years. How sadly the church missed her dynamic leadership as it struggled to rebuild itself! In order to keep the memory of her loyalty and enthusiasm fresh, the social room, in which she served for so many years, was named in 1958 the MARY ANDRE ROOM.

### *A New Membership Card*

The following statement of church aims was prepared and printed on one side of a new membership card as follows:

"The Peoples Church is founded upon individual freedom of belief; upon devotion to advancing truth; upon the democratic process in human relations; upon universal brotherhood undivided by nation, race or creed; upon allegiance to the cause of a united world community; and upon a belief in the presence in the universe of a moral and spiritual

power which some call God, some say comes from God, and others leave nameless.

"We proclaim the free and universal church from which no man is excluded save by the death of goodness in his own breast, the church of undivided human brotherhood based upon the growing common faith of all mankind."

On the reverse side of the card were these words:

"Joining the Peoples Church is a simple procedure. You are not asked to assent to any creed, or to alter your personal convictions to fit some arbitrary formula. Our members are simply a group of people who are in common agreement about the statement printed on the reverse side of this card. If you would like to join the Peoples Church and thus identify yourself with others seeking to realize these grand social and religious principles, kindly sign this card and hand it to an usher or to the minister."

Larger projects were under way as the uphill climb continued. The church was painted on the outside and the social rooms were redecorated. The insurance was increased to \$35,000 on the building and \$6,000 on the furnishings. Mr. Curray proposed the start of a plan for a parsonage, to open a fund for that purpose. A resolution was drawn up by Mr. Claassen for a parsonage committee, outlining the duties in detail. These resolutions were adopted by the Board of Trustees and were put in force. Mr. Crissman wrote a letter supporting the consideration of a parsonage as an investment that would be not taxable, that would be salable and would save the rent we now pay. It would also make our position more attractive for securing future ministers, he thought. By 1959 this fund has reached \$4,134.15.

### *The Re-Incorporation of 1948*

In planning thus the purchase of a parsonage at some future time, the Trustees considered that the articles of incorporation were not in proper shape. So they had amended and substituted articles of incorporation prepared by attorneys. They were adopted at the annual meeting of the Peoples Christian Church June 7, 1948 and filed July 8, 1948 as follows:

- (1) The name of the corporation is to be The Peoples Church.
- (2) The objects and purposes of the Corporation shall be generally to aid and foster the welfare of mankind through religion, education and assistance.
- (3) The purpose is the same as the Peoples Christian Church of 1920.
- (4) Four Trustees are to be elected each year for a term of three years.
- (5) It clarifies the power and authority of the Trustees, so that they can legally purchase a parsonage.
- (6) The articles are made less difficult to amend.

In 1948 a Community Lecture Series of four lectures was undertaken with Temple Judah. They afforded excellent pub-

licity, good financial aid, and a service to the city. The project was continued for two more years.

### *History of the School of Religion*

In 1949 Mrs. John M. Ely, Jr. became Superintendent of the Church School of Religion. A tremendous amount of work went into the development of a course of study and of activities for the school and great progress was made in spite of physical handicaps, such as lack of space for classrooms and lack of records of the organization of the curriculum of former years.

Back in 1875, when the church records began to be kept more carefully, a Sunday School Committee was first mentioned. In 1878 they named Mrs. C. D. Van Vechten as superintendent. She probably continued to serve until the 1880's and was followed by Clarence N. Jenkins, who loved to play his violin for the children. Mr. J. Y. Kennedy was head of the school from 1895 to 1902, Miss Josephine Munholland serving in 1902. Then Mr. Kennedy again acted as superintendent from 1903 to 1910, relieved of these duties for two or three years by Miss Carrie M. Palmer. In 1910 there was a brief mention of the school, giving Mary Andre as the Superintendent and recording 75 enrolled, not counting Dr. Newton's class for young men.

By 1915 there was a membership of 121 plus the cradle roll. In 1922 Mary Lackersteen took over the duties from Mary Andre and served two years. Then Mrs. W. H. McClintock directed the school until 1928, when Mary Andre again served one year. She had nine teachers, and active Scout and Campfire groups. As early as 1926 the Garwood class for adults was "very interesting and worthwhile." Myra Willis was superintendent from 1929 to 1931, and Allan Thurman led the school from 1931 to 1935. The school was reported as showing "purpose and vitality." It was outgrowing the available space so that movable screens were constructed to form booths for some privacy in the discussions of various classes. By 1935 the scant records mentioned the "growth of the school and the enthusiasm among pupils and teachers." In 1937 there was a "tribute to Mr. Termohlen, superintendent, and to Rev. Welke for their splendid work in promoting interest in the Sunday School."

Before Mrs. Stella Bachelder assumed the duties in 1939, she and the young officers of the school had a chance to attend the conference at Lake Geneva in preparation. She was superintendent until 1941. Dr. Vernon Lichtenstein, assisted by Mrs. Lumir Vondracek, kept the school going from 1941 to 1945. Then Dr. L. R. Wilson of Coe College and Ruth Ann



Hasek were in charge, from 1945 to 1947. In 1946 there were "four classes with an attendance from 12 to 25." Mr. S. M. Pattee was superintendent from 1947 to 1949. These shadowy outlines would indicate that the interest of the church membership through the years had been overwhelmingly centered in the pulpit.

Grace and Elisabeth Low, whose parents brought them up in this church, have vivid and fond memories of the Sunday School in the early 1900's. It was held after church from twelve to one and opened with a general meeting of hymns, prayers, and a number of quotations, called "sentiments," by the children, chosen from the Bible or literature in general. Then the children divided up into classes. Both Grace and Betty, as high school pupils, belonged to Carrie M. Palmer's class, called the "Blue Ribbon Class," that met in what was later the minister's study and is now the choir room. They studied the Bible, memorizing beautiful passages, and a booklet on Universalism. From year to year the class dipped into World Religions and thus learned at an early age their basic oneness. Salvation by character was also stressed in their class. They tried so hard for excellent attendance that they were usually the monthly winners of the banner, as an award of merit. There were 18 or 20 in the class, with monthly "spreads" and plenty of fun.

The school owned quite a collection of well selected books with Mr. Walter Allison's mother as librarian. The small south-east room was the library. Money for books was accumulated in part through "birthday celebrations." The children did not receive a gift, but on the contrary gave to the library book fund the number of pennies to match their years, 12 pennies, for instance, for a 12 year-old. It was astonishing how much money this brought in. Grace and Betty would pour over those books, sometimes for reading and other times just to find suitable "sentiments," so that it was there that they first developed their great love of reading.

The first Sunday in June was called "Flower Sunday," instead of Children's Day. They were all so very proud to go upstairs with the grown-ups, to thrill to the sound of the pipe-organ and to take part in the program. Also the Christmas program was a delight, for Mr. Kennedy was always Santa Claus and a truly wonderful one. They remember coming early one Sunday for a special treat to hear Laurance Jones of the Piney Woods School speak. That was a rich experience indeed.

One of their most vivid memories was of the Iroquois Theater Fire, December 30, 1903. And the reason? Miss Josephine

Munholland, who taught Mamie Doud, later wife of President Eisenhower, at Jackson School, had become superintendent of our Church School in the fall of 1902. She went to Chicago for the holidays in 1903 and was in the theater at the time of the fire. She got out safely, but once outside, she suddenly remembered all the children in the audience. So she went back in to help them, rescued a good many, but herself lost her life. A few weeks later, a special memorial service was held in the church auditorium, attended by both the adults and the school.

This pattern of the school, so vividly remembered, was probably the one used for many, many years.

In the '30's the following record of the school shows some changes, but a wholesome activity:

"The school of liberal religion met every Sunday at 9:50. Interesting lesson materials included the lives of noble men and women throughout the ages, nature appreciation, everyday problems of children and young people, the Bible and other scriptures. There were classes from kindergarten to senior departments. Sympathetic teachers used approved methods including visual aids, dramatization, and project work. Furthermore an adult group as an open forum was still meeting under the wise and stimulating leadership of Professor Garwood in the church auditorium. Vital current topics touched every phase of human life, individual and collective."

### *Reorganization of the Church School in 1949*

The 1949 problem of building up the church school was two-fold, that of interesting and enlightening the children and that of attracting the parents. The thinking of the school staff was expressed succinctly in a prospectus as follows:

"OUR PURPOSE is to give the child a rich background in the great religious ideas of the past, the story of the evolution of man as a spiritual being, and the findings of modern science; to foster in the child a sense of spiritual awareness, a habit of seeking truths, and a feeling of brotherhood toward all humanity.

"OUR GOAL is to make available to the child resources which will enable him to interpret his own experiences, to solve some of his own problems, and eventually to formulate his own religious, ethical and social philosophy.

"OUR METHODS are study, worship, discussion, and participation in activities and projects, designed to give the child an opportunity for the understanding and expression of religious and ethical ideals."

The enrollment of 20 more or less hypothetical members in 1949 grew for two reasons. In the first place, the staff of the church school was able to interest more and more parents in the program and more and more younger people in the church, largely through activities. By Brotherhood Week of 1951 their well-established group of some 25 or 30 children was ready to

put on a pantomime play for Layman's Sunday before the congregation at the worship service. It was based on an adaptation of a book by Eva Knox Evans, entitled *All About Us*.

By November the school puppeteers produced their first play, *Rebekah at the Well*, adapted by Polly Ely from the Bible story. Mrs. James Young and Mr. and Mrs. Archie Bauman were responsible for its production. It was given at the "All-Church Fall Festival" for two days running. By thus participating as important members of the church family in an all-church affair, the children were greatly delighted to help raise a thousand dollars to pay off the church debt. They also, by invitation, presented their puppet show at the bazaar of the First Presbyterian Church. Another puppet show, *Moses*, written by Mrs. James Young and under the same directors, was given in the fall of 1952 at the Peoples Church, at Temple Judah for the Sabbath Classes, at The Christmas party of Ambar Grotto and at the Children's Christmas party of the Coe College Faculty Club. Mrs. Ely says:

"The performances of The Peoples Church Puppeteers cannot be over-estimated both for the learning experience afforded the children and for the good public relations which they were able to build up for our church school."

In the second place, the enrollment grew, due to the development of an up-to-date curriculum. For 1958-59 the staff could announce a program from kindergarten to adults, originally having run from kindergarten through the sixth grade. Here is an outline of this course of study:

#### Lower School:

(1) PRE-SCHOOL PLAY GROUP, to give them "an opportunity to become acquainted with each other and with the school, as well as valuable experiences in co-operative play."

(2) KINDERGARTEN: text—*The Family Finds Out*

(3) FIRST GRADERS: texts—*Animal Babies* and *Joseph, the Story of Twelve Brothers*

(4) SECOND AND THIRD GRADERS: text—*From Long Ago and Many Lands*

#### Upper School:

(1) INTERMEDIATE (fourth and fifth graders): texts—*All About Us*, *People Are Important*, and *The Beginnings of Life and Death*.

(2) JUNIOR CLASS (sixth and seventh graders): text—*Jesus, the Carpenter's Son*.

(3) JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (eighth and ninth graders): the story of Unitarianism, with these reference texts—*Our Unitarian Heritage*, *What Do Religious Liberals Believe?*

(4) UNITARIAN YOUTH FORUM (Senior High School): text—*The Church Across the Street*.

(5) AN ADULT CLASS in religion and philosophy, known as the



HERITAGE GROUP, with Frank Young as leader. (The meetings are now held Monday evenings from 7:30 to 11:00 p.m. with an average attendance of twelve.)

There is an alternate course, used on alternate years as follows:

- (1) KINDERGARTEN: texts—*Martin and Judy, This Is the World*
- (2) GRADES 1 and 2: text—*The Tuckers*
- (3) GRADES 3 and 4: text—*We Learn About the Bible*
- (4) GRADES 5 and 6: texts—*Aknaton, Moses*
- (5) GRADES 7 and 8: Church History, *Church of Our Fathers*
- (6) HIGH SCHOOL: Unitarian Youth Forum (a chance to bring in and discuss religious ideas.)

In 1954 at the annual meeting, Mrs. Ely spoke feelingly of the work of Mrs. Young, Mrs. Bauman, Signi Falk and others in directing the puppet play, *Oganga*, concerning the life of Dr. Albert Schweitzer. To quote:

"The children had been prepared for its sympathetic production by a course in the life and work of Dr. Schweitzer. Dr. Marcus Bach, who had recently visited Dr. Schweitzer at Lambarene gave a most poignant description of the working day in French Equatorial Africa. A draft for \$75 was sent to Dr. Schweitzer from the school as well as the \$25 of the Christmas donation."

*Oganga* was later published by the Starr King Press, subsidiary of Beacon Press.

In 1955 the Peoples Church Puppeteers produced, under the supervision of Mrs. Young and Mrs. Bauman, *The Breath of Life*, a story of Dr. Joseph Priestley as scientist and Unitarian minister. The proceeds, \$66.40, and the twenty-five dollar annual Christmas gift were again sent to Dr. Schweitzer's work. This play was also put on by our puppeteers at the luncheon of the Annual Meeting of the Iowa Unitarian Association in Iowa City.

The final puppet play, *The Magic Window*, by Polly Ely, was given at the Christmas Party of 1955. "After the performance," wrote Mrs. Ely, "the children had a big surprise in store for them. The cast filed out in front. They found seats while waiting for Santa Claus. Then the curtains of the puppet stage opened once more, to reveal a bust of Albert Schweitzer, which Mr. and Mrs. M. S. Hallman had sent to them as a special gift of appreciation." The Schweitzer head and the cherished Schweitzer letters in frames may now be seen in the lower hall of the new activities building.

The curriculum of the Church School is selected by our Education Committee, largely from material made available by the New Beacon Press Series and by the Council of Liberal Churches. The courses on Dr. Schweitzer and Dr. Priestley

were planned by Mrs. James Young and the course on Unitarian History by Mr. and Mrs. John M. Ely, Jr.

The Education Committee also concerns itself with finding leadership for our Youth Groups. Fiona Kennedy, Peter Thurman, Jerry and Janet Boise, and Mr. and Mrs. Allen Volkenant have been successive leaders of these groups. Both a senior and a junior group are active with weekly suppers, followed by well-planned programs, and activities such as skating, caroling, handcrafts and the like.

They have held two Youth Sundays. In 1958 they were greatly helped by Dr. Howard L. Parsons and Mr. and Mrs. Volkenant. In 1959 Jack Hartley took that responsibility. Both programs were excellent, but the attendance was disappointingly low, falling in 1959 to an adult audience of 46!

On October 4, 1958 the Education Committee sponsored the premiere showing in Cedar Rapids, of the authorized film-biography of Albert Schweitzer, made in color in Alsace and in French Equatorial Africa. It had received the 1958 Academy Award for the best documentary film. Two hundred sixty-four adults and children saw this film under our roof. As a part of many less tangible results the Education Committee forwarded more than \$200 to help Dr. Schweitzer's work at Lambarene.

The present chairman of this Education Committee is Mrs. James Young; Dr. Lichtenstein and Mrs. John M. Ely, Jr. were previous chairmen.

The 1959 enrollment in the Church School was 103 with 15 children on the cradle roll. In spite of many gaps in the record of the school this story from 1875 to 1959 represents a general on-going and meaningful development of activities to meet the needs of our youth.

In addition to the important duties as superintendent of the local Church School, Mrs. John M. Ely, Jr. has, since 1953, served the Iowa Unitarian Association as chairman of the new Education Committee. Mrs. Ely's duties are to keep track of the Church Schools of the Unitarian Churches and Fellowships in the Association. Then for the last two years she has served on the Religious Education Committee of the Western Unitarian Conference, a similar position, though on a broader scale, serving churches from Ohio to the Rocky Mountains. Among the wider committee duties is that of planning the Religious Education Directors' Institute to be held at Meadville Theological School at an as yet indefinite time. Her husband, John M. Ely, Jr., is head of the Missouri Valley Federation of Liberal Religious Youth, a seven-state organization, extending from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. These respon-

sibilities of Mr. and Mrs. Ely belong in the history of The Peoples Church to show how some besides the minister reach out beyond the walls of this church and the City of Cedar Rapids.

### *Further Signs of Progress*

As the years of climbing continued, the burden of debt was becoming lighter, reduced to \$2,675 in 1948. Interesting sermon series, book-nights and increasing civic activities also helped the upward climb. In addition Mr. Argow was speaking over KCRG radio at 3:15 every Thursday, a program of current comment, notes on the philosophy of everyday living and an occasional book-review. Eighty-one new members were added to the church in 1949-50 to bring new encouragement to the minister and congregation.

In March 1949 a new group that called itself "The 20-40 Club" was formed to offer church activity for couples in that age-range, their meetings to center around programs of various kinds. They later changed their name to "The Ad-Lib Club."

Other signs of progress appeared. A weekly *Peoples Voice*, a kind of parish newsletter, was authorized to replace the monthly one. A weekly order of service was to be mimeographed. A monthly "Coffee Hour" right after the worship service was undertaken to promote sociability. Mrs. Lumir Vondracek was the first social chairman in charge. Hearing aid equipment was installed to serve five pews at the west side of the auditorium.

By 1951 the most difficult part of the rehabilitation of The Peoples Church was accomplished. That year Allan Thurman resigned as president, his office and duties being taken over by Dr. Vernon E. Lichtenstein. In appreciation of Mr. Thurman's eight years of brave, uphill struggle the Board of Trustees passed the following resolution:

"Whereas under the leadership of Allan G. Thurman as president of its Board of Trustees from 1943 to 1951, The Peoples Church has steadily grown stronger in terms of membership, increasing activity and financial position, as well as in the regard of the community, and whereas this growth and progress have been in good measure the result of Allan Thurman's leadership, of his intense personal loyalty to the cause of liberal religion, so well expressed at our annual meetings and on other occasions, of many, many hours spent each year on church work and budget solicitations, of qualities of personality, which have made for a smooth-running organization and an absense of personal conflicts;

"Therefore be it resolved that his friends and colleagues on the Board of Trustees at this concluding Board meeting of the church year, June 8, 1951, in this fashion confess the debt of gratitude we and our church owe Allan Thurman and express our deep and abiding appreciation for all he has done for The Peoples Church."



## *Consolidation of Gains*

Soon after a movement for a merger of the Unitarians and the Universalists on a national scale was being seriously considered, Mr. Argow discussed the matter with the Trustees, who arranged for a parish meeting on the subject early in February. A favorable resolution was unanimously adopted, stating that this local church, as a matter of opinion, would favor such a national merger.

In 1951 a note to Mr. Lumir Vondracek, who for years had been an efficient chairman of the House Committee, was prepared:

"The Board of Trustees wish to express their appreciation and thanks for your service rendered during the summer months, an attribute of your loyalty and interest in our beloved church."

Also a telegram from the president, Dr. Lichtenstein, was sent to Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow of Baltimore as follows:

"The Board of Trustees and the people of the congregation of The Peoples Church of Cedar Rapids send congratulations on the fortieth anniversary of your entrance on a most distinguished career in the liberal ministry. All our hearts are with you today."

A constantly expanding budget spoke eloquently of church growth. This financial blossoming was encouraged greatly when the mortgage to the A. U. A. was paid off December 31, 1951. In 1952 the budget had reached \$9,500 in contrast to the \$5,000 figure of 1944; in 1953 it went up to \$12,925, and by 1957 had risen to \$16,000. Sunday collections in 1952 had gone up to \$1,179, denoting good attendance and liberal giving. A project called "The Fall Festival," under the direction of Homer Foster, Sidney Clark and John Ely, Jr., proved a financial success and a morale booster by offering a chance for all members and friends to participate. Besides a variety of things to sell, there were all kinds of side-shows for affording fun and making money. One of the most popular of these activities was pitching chipped pieces of chinaware at targets labeled CHURCH MORTGAGE, INHIBITIONS, MOTHER-IN-LAW and so on.

In the fall of 1953 the convention of the Iowa Unitarian Association was held in The Peoples Church, a real advantage to the local organization because of the opportunities afforded a large number to hear outstanding speakers and to take part in round table discussions. This church was host also in 1945, 1936 and 1930.

The Board of Trustees authorized a letter of thanks and appreciation to Mrs. Mae Whilock for her three years of diligent service, accurate keeping of the record books, giving of her

home and refreshments and for her personally assuming many expenses in her capacity as secretary of the Board. Other excellent secretaries have been Miss Grace Shields, Miss Grace Low, Mrs. Manning Morrill, and Miss Betty Low, with Mr. F. J. Lazell, Mrs. W. S. Collier, Mrs. Irving Emery and Miss Hazel Brown serving in the teens and the '20's.

Grace Shields and Betty Low deserve special mention. Grace Shields served continuously and faithfully for 15 years from 1928 to 1943. Unusual as this record is, her outstanding contribution was probably that of being the one most influential in interesting Waldemar Argow in Cedar Rapids and in securing him as our pastor in 1944. Betty Low has given services far beyond her compensation. In 1952 she was both secretary and registrar, but just registrar in 1953. Then from 1954 to the present she has been not only secretary and registrar for the Board of Trustees, but has also served as secretary to the pastor. During the interim year of 1957-58, due to her intimate knowledge of the organization and the membership, she was really the nerve center of The Peoples Church.

In the well planned folder for budget information for 1954-55 there was a summary of the last ten years as follows:

"The decade 1944-~~54~~ has been a period of outstanding growth and success for our church. Today our church school, Sunday attendance, annual budget and membership have reached record highs. It is an inspiring record we have established and all our friends and members who have helped make it should feel justifiably proud. But growth and success entail obligations too. To continue this success story it is imperative that we reach the pledge goal described in these pages . . . . The Future of The Peoples Church is in your hands."

Another major undertaking was the organization of a volunteer Peoples Church Choir in the fall of 1953, under the direction of our soloist, Mrs. Lenore Stark Topinka, with Mrs. Lulu Welty as organist. At first they sang every other Sunday, but enthusiasm grew so much that they could soon plan to sing every Sunday. This is a great tribute to the ability and personality of their director. Their loyalty has been astonishing, on hand for practice every Wednesday night and for a "warm-up" practice each Sunday morning, usually with a full quota present in good weather or bad. Now, in 1959, they have a choir-room and a very nicely growing library of music. They have added immeasurably to the dignity, vitality, warmth and beauty of the worship service.

At the annual meeting for 1954 Mr. Argow said, "The highlight of the year was the winter series of lectures on various phases of contemporary American literature by Dr. Vernon E. Lichtenstein. This is a phase of our community life, which the

Liberal Church and this church in particular does superlatively well. It dates from Dr. Newton's lectures of forty-odd years ago."

### *The Dream of an Activities Building*

Since a church needs constant vigilance to keep up the physical plant as well as the financial, spiritual and social needs, an outside paint-job of the exterior woodwork was undertaken, the redecoration of the auditorium having been accomplished the year before. The insurance company repaired the roof, damaged by hail. Also a building project, inspired by the growing Church School was under serious consideration.

The real story of the new building started in 1954, when Grace Low, Ethel Shean, Mrs. Ely and Mr. Argow were enroute to the Iowa Unitarian Association's annual meeting, held that year in Lincoln, Nebraska. As they passed through Omaha, Mr. Argow mentioned in a casual way that the Unitarian Church there had just recently completed a Religious Education wing at a cost of \$50,000. He took pains to drive by it and all of them were much impressed. Mr. Argow seemed to feel that The Peoples Church would be able to raise a similar amount of money for such a building. On the way home those four stopped in for a tour of the building and were still more impressed by the space, the equipment, and the beauty of the place. Thus began the dream.

By the fall of 1956 the Church School was so crowded that it was divided into two sessions: older children came at ten, younger ones at eleven. Although this arrangement really did alleviate the conditions of crowding that had existed in the school, this often meant a division of families and was most inconvenient for parents.

Meanwhile, the possibility, "the dream," of an addition to the church building began to take hold of both Trustees and congregation. Gordon McKay and George Wilhelm were consulted as to an activities building on the lot at the rear of the church. The Trustees gave authority to proceed with an investigation of design and cost along with a survey of the ability of the members to give. A four-page brochure was prepared prior to the annual meeting of May 1956, when the members would have to consider several questions: Is it necessary? Do we want outside help in collecting funds? Are we going ahead as a church? The Board estimated that it would cost an average of \$300 per member. Mr. Claassen made a moving plea concerning the expansion project.

Some members wanted to get a new location and build a



new church edifice. This attractive proposition was carefully investigated. They figured it would cost \$200,000 to build anew with a comparatively small number of giving units in the membership. The 80-year-old building was thoroughly inspected and was declared sound. A downtown location that would be centrally located for members on either side of the river seemed logical. The official count of those voting for expansion was 108 in favor to 5 against.

Once this vote was taken, all accepted the decision and got behind those in charge of the expansion project. Such a spirit of unity in the midst of great diversity has been a notable characteristic of this organization. Though there is great variety in the membership from every point of view, such as age, financial position, occupation, racial and educational background, once a decision has been reached, they all pull together to attain the goal.

### *The Successful Campaign for Funds*

Many Trustees and members were insistent that professional fund raisers should be employed. Roy E. Curray and George C. Claassen did not agree. Mr. Curray accepted the general chairmanship of the campaign and asked Gordon Simonds to assist him. In reality Gordon Simonds was a co-chairman because Mr. Curray confined his attention to the larger special gifts, while Mr. Simonds appointed majors and captains, secured workers and organized the general campaign. Of the \$60,000 goal, Mr. Curray undertook to raise \$40,000 in special gifts. Informative material was sent out and two dinners were held in the church to start the drive, the first on November 7 for half of the membership (from A to M) and the other on November 8 for the other half. The bond of the Treasurer, Mrs. Fluegel, was increased to \$20,000 and a separate account was opened in the bank for the "Church Building Fund."

Three generous gifts launched the campaign. Nell L. Cherry led off with a gift of \$10,000; George T. and Zulina S. Wilhelm gave \$7,500; and Dr. Roy K. Keech gave \$5,000. Other smaller but sizable gifts increased the total special gifts to more than \$45,000. A great deal of work was done by many members. Before the campaign was over the total of the pledges exceeded \$72,000, without the employment of any professional help.

Manning C. Morrill, then vice-president of the Board, and slated to be building chairman, did much preliminary work. He consulted Gordon McKay, who drew some tentative plans, but before the plans had crystalized, Mr. Morrill was transferred to another city. The Board sent notes of appreciation

to Mr. Morrill and Mr. McKay, paying the latter a small amount for the preliminary plans. George T. Wilhelm was on a trip in the Orient, but agreed to take the responsibility for the building as soon as he returned. Meanwhile, Robert S. Waples substituted for him as vice-chairman.

As soon as Mr. Wilhelm did return to Cedar Rapids, Brown and Healy were employed as architects. Plans were drawn, bids were asked for and submitted and the work started. Mr. Wilhelm, who had been chairman of the building committee when the church was remodeled in 1925, had had engineering training as well as much practical experience. He devoted an enormous amount of time to the Peoples Church addition. The successful completion and general suitability of the building is due largely to his ability, imagination and painstaking attention.

Mr. Argow and Mrs. Ely acted as advisors to Mr. Wilhelm. The committee on furnishings consisted of Mrs. Norman Dake, Mrs. Ely, Mr. Wilhelm, Mrs. Donald Staab and Mr. Bauman. Mrs. Dake and Mrs. Welty, organist, chose a Baldwin Electric Organ, Model 5 A, with a 40-watt amplifier, to be installed on a thirty-day trial basis. It was later accepted. In this connection Mr. Ed Buser furnished a little side-light on the old organ. As a boy he pumped it for years. Glen Low was the last boy to serve in that capacity before it was motorized. He was paid 25 cents a Sunday, but his mother saw to it that he gave that 25 cents to the Sunday School, that met right after the worship service!

In the summer of 1954 Mr. Argow enlarged and enriched his fund of experience by a trip to Europe, a personal tour, that left him free to explore what interested him the most. Then in 1956 his summer vacation was a trip around the world by sea and air. The fruits of these journeys were given to the church and the community in the form of illustrated travel-talks that dipped below the surface with the artistry and the discerning observation of a poet-reporter.

A new project in 1956 was a radio series by Mr. Argow, financed by the church and entitled "Mature Living." It had an excellent program spot Sundays at 3:15 and produced a favorable response. Some new church equipment was also added. A tape-recorder was tried out and later purchased, so that shut-ins could thus share the worship service from time to time. The Van Vechten Guild offered to transport it to various homes, as requested. The church also received the anonymous gift of a slide projector. Mr. George Sheldon built a pedestal for pulpit flowers and a music cabinet for the choir's growing

store of music. Mr. Pierce made an attractive cabinet for the tape-recorder. Thus the life of the church developed through the work of both pulpit and pew.

Mr. John Temeyer, for several years chairman of the house committee, secured for the church the services of his uncle, Mr. Charles Temeyer, as custodian. At the annual meeting in 1957 Mr. Argow explained the work of Mr. Temeyer and his wife as way above what is expected of his office. For instance he had made a new sand-table for the children, benches, a lost-and-found shelf, a flower stand and a hat-rack. He was keeping plants growing in the hallway windows. Both inside and out the church had been beautifully kept.

In June 1957 Mr. Gordon Simonds, the new president, said to the Trustees:

"The church is now in an excellent position to expand both its membership and its activities. The new building will be a great impetus, and the strengthening of organizational work will make it easier to overcome any recessionary slump, should the church at some future time lose its outstanding minister."

### *The Laying of a Second Cornerstone*

Another milestone was achieved in the Peoples Church history when, in a moving and meaningful ceremony, attended by members and friends, a second cornerstone was laid into place, October 9, 1957, with more than 25 per cent of the new building completed.

The Rev. Waldemar Argow, for 13 years minister here, presided, assisted by three former presidents, Mr. George C. Claassen, Mr. Allan G. Thurman and Dr. Vernon E. Lichtenstein, and the current president, Mr. Gordon D. Simonds. Each was presented with a small trowel, on which were engraved his name and the tenure of his service. Mr. George T. Wilhelm, as chairman of the building committee, presented the building to Mr. Simonds, who accepted it in the name of the membership. Using their small trowels, the four men cemented the cornerstone into place. Into it went records of the church and church school, the *Gazette* and coins of 1957 mintage. Following the brief ceremony, in which Mr. Argow commented on "the dream come true," the members gathered in the social room of the church, where under the direction of the Men's Club a picnic supper was served. Mr. Argow spoke about the place "this historic church, this beacon light, had made for itself." "The future is bright," he said, "now that we will have adequate room for the growing church school and space for its many activities."



## *Resignation of Waldemar Argow*

The Board of Trustees met July 17, 1957, to hear Waldemar Argow's resignation, in order to become minister of the First Unitarian Church of Toledo, Ohio, a large church with a beautiful and adequately convenient new church edifice. The Trustees accepted it with reluctance and deep regret after having done their best to persuade him to stay. A representative pulpit committee was appointed at once with Dr. Vernon E. Lichtenstein as chairman. The Newton Alliance was represented by Mrs. Mae Whilock; the Social Circle by Mrs. Fred A. Small; the Van Vechten Guild by Mrs. Frank B. Avery; the Youth Group by Paul Cameron; the Ad-Lib Club by Mrs. John P. Barthel; the Choir by Mrs. W. A. Pickard; the Men's Club by Mr. J. C. Crawley; the Church School by Mrs. John M. Ely, Jr.; and also Mr. Curray, Roger Pierce, Mr. Claassen, Robert S. Chadima, and William R. Shuttleworth.

The following excerpt from the letter that Waldemar Argow wrote to the members of The Peoples Church sums up the past and looks forward to the future:

"This is the most difficult letter I have ever had to write in my life. It concerns a matter I think we have all known was coming.

"I am writing to tell you that, at a meeting of the Board of Trustees Wednesday evening, July 17, I submitted my resignation as minister of The Peoples Church, effective September First, 1957. I have accepted a call to become minister of the First Unitarian Church of Toledo, Ohio.

"I hope you know how I feel about our church. If you do not, mere words will never be able to tell you. I think few men have been privileged to have such a ministry as I have had here. I have loved this church and its people. The prospect of leaving you hurts more deeply than a physical pain.

"Since I have been in Cedar Rapids, and increasingly in recent years, I have had some very attractive invitations to consider the pulpits of other churches. Finally one invitation has come to which I felt that I just couldn't say no. The First Unitarian Church of Toledo is not only one of our largest churches, it is also one of our two or three most attractive churches from my particular point of view—kinds of people, balanced interests, etc. I have just spent a week meeting with the church staff, the various organizations, and the members generally, and I found that the Toledo church seems to have the same kind of warm, friendly cooperative spirit that has so beautifully characterized our own fellowship these past thirteen years. And that is the nicest compliment I can pay the Toledo church!—to compare it favorably with our own.

"Early in September I plan to return to Cedar Rapids and preach a farewell sermon on Sunday, September 8, which is the Sunday our church year traditionally opens.

"If I go from Cedar Rapids with a heavy heart at leaving so many dear friends, it will be also in the proud conviction that you will take the foundation we have now established and will build upon it an even finer, greater and more wonderful church."

## *Another Interim Year*

As he had promised, Waldemar Argow returned to open the church year. Here are some fragments from his farewell sermon:

"Friendship is really a low-voltage form of love, and where love is concerned there are no goodbyes—there are just—ALOHAS—

"The secret by which love and friendship are preserved is found in the medium of memory. All the experiences we have shared together in this place, the insights I think we have sometimes glimpsed into the nature of life and reality, all the fun and fellowship, the tears and laughter—all of these are treasures that nothing can take from us. As long as I live, I know that I shall never forget them, and through the miracle of memory I know too that I shall be with you here in this beloved place so many, many times in the days and months and years that lie ahead."

The following Tuesday evening members and friends gathered in the social room of the church in tribute to Mr. Argow. Humorous incidents through the years were recounted and gifts from the Youth Group and the church were presented. Mr. Argow urged loyalty, courage and imagination in the months ahead. "A chapter is closed, and a new book is about to be opened."

No greater tribute to The Peoples Church could be devised than the record of the year 1957-58. The president, Gordon Simonds, summed it up in June 1958:

"A year ago we joined together in an adventure in church operation without a professional religious leader. Although we experienced a few 'blue' moments, the outcome was never in jeopardy—thanks to many loyal and capable workers."

John M. Ely, Jr., vice-president of the church in this crisis, was charged with filling the pulpit each Sunday. Mr. Frank Young, backed by a devotedly loyal choir, ably conducted the Sunday worship service until the spring of 1958, when the committee asked Dr. Howard L. Parsons, trained as a Presbyterian minister and teaching in the Department of Philosophy at Coe College, to be our interim pastor. Through his sympathetic understanding of the needs and desires of this congregation and his entering whole-heartedly into many of the duties of a permanent pastor, he won an affectionate place in the hearts of the membership. His contribution to the *Peoples Voice* for the opening week of Rev. N. W. Lovely's ministry was characteristic:

"Ben Franklin, noticing a sun carved on the back of a chair at the Constitutional Convention, trusted it was rising and not setting. In like manner the sun of The Peoples Church has risen in the past, guiding

leaders and congregations. Again it rises under new leadership. And so it calls its people to new faith, hope and labor."

The following richly deserved tribute appeared in the *Peoples Voice* for June 6-13, 1958:

"Appreciation and thanks (not just a hundred-fold, but a thousand-fold) should be extended to John Ely, Jr., who undertook the arduous task of finding high calibre men to speak from our pulpit. Week after week, month after month this was accomplished. Had he lived in the fourth century, Mr. Ely would be called a 'martyr' for the many hours spent in writing, telephoning and persuading, but it was 'all in the day's work', he would say. Holding the second line was Mrs. Ely (Polly). Then, simply—to this wonderful couple we say 'thank you'. Assisting him were Mrs. James Sigmund, Mrs. Conrad Wurtz and Frank Young, who helped in countless ways."

In the same copy of the *Peoples Voice* under the caption, "Express Appreciation to Committee," it said:

"The pulpit committee, headed by Dr. Vernon E. Lichtenstein, has done a monumental piece of work in interviewing, reading biographies, sermons and letters of recommendation in an effort to select a minister for our pulpit. Thirty-five ministers were contacted, and a dozen were brought to Davenport or Iowa City as possible candidates. Grateful thanks are extended to each member."

### *Rev. Napoleon William Lovely*

The pulpit committee presented Rev. Napoleon W. Lovely to the congregation on Sunday, June 15. After hearing Mr. Lovely at the worship service Sunday morning and meeting him and his wife at a reception Sunday evening, the members of the church at a special meeting Monday evening by an overwhelming vote called him as pastor. In accepting the call Rev. Lovely wrote:

"It was with a mixture of pride and humility that I learned last night from your executive committee of my election to the ministry of your church.

"But I look forward with unmixed pleasure to meeting and working with you as your minister and, I hope, your friend. You have made The Peoples Church into a stimulating environment and an exciting adventure in religion for yourselves, for each other, and for your children.

"I am happy to have a part in this adventure, and to share your growing sensitivity to the demands and the rewards of the religious life.

"Depending upon your support, encouragement, and guidance, I shall endeavor to serve you all, as individuals or as a congregation, in the best traditions of the liberal spirit."

Though they do not show the spirit of Mr. Lovely as revealed in that letter, background facts are nevertheless interesting and essential. A graduate of Harvard, with A. B., M. A., and S. T. B. degrees, he served as Chaplain at Proctor Academy, Andover, New Hampshire, from 1938 to 1941. Through the



war years, 1941-45, he served as U. S. Army Chaplain. At the organization of the First Unitarian Church, San Antonio, Texas, he was their first minister. Two years, 1951-53, Mr. Lovely spent as a special student in the Harvard Graduate School of Education. From 1953 until 1958 he was minister of the first parish of Norwell, Massachusetts. In addition to serving as director of the Unitarian Service Pension Society and of the Planned Parenthood Association of Massachusetts, Mr. Lovely was a member of the Civil Liberties Union of that state. His wife, Evelyn Lovely, holding an A. B. degree from Cornell University and an M. A. from Columbia University, was teaching English in Hanover High School before coming to Cedar Rapids. She has served as director of Religious Education in the First Unitarian Church of Dallas, Texas.

### *Opening of the Activities Center*

By the spring of 1958 the new building was ready for use. The enthusiasm of the church school over their new quarters was hardly greater than that of the whole congregation. Everyone who had any part in making this activities building possible felt that the money had been spent to the best advantage for convenience, comfort and charm.

Very happily someone had thought to give names to various rooms as memorials. The new lounge now bears a plaque over the door which reads,

NELL LOUISE CHERRY  
*In memory of her parents*

The plaque above the door of the Little Theater Room bears the words,

GEORGE TAYLOR WILHELM  
ZULINA SEVERA WILHELM  
*In memory of their parents*

Over the door of an attractive classroom a plaque reads,

DR. ROY K. KEECH  
BESS C. KEECH  
*In memory of their parents*

Another important development was the establishment of an Explorer Scout Post, sponsored by the Men's Club with Don Wymore as adviser. It was also arranged that the Boy Scout Council would meet in the Andre Room once a month.

A Book Shop was set up with Mr. Gene D. Phillips in charge, to offer the best in serious and thoughtful reading at a moderate price.

The Tri-S Alliance, organized November 2, 1957, was not named until January 6, 1958. It is an informal group of about

20 women, who usually meet the second Monday of each month for Study, Service and Sociability, as its name signifies. It has no definite membership roll, no dues, and no distinct activities in church life, but the group participated effectively in the all-church Christmas bazaars of 1957 and 1958.

### ***Memorial Fund Established***

Suggested by the loss of a valued and valuable member, Mary Lackersteen, a Memorial Fund has been established, through which friends may honor the memory of those "loved and lost a while." However, before memorial funds were thought of, quite a few members and friends have given while living or have left as bequests considerable sums of money to this church. Other gifts, in addition to that of Mary L. Pingrey, came from Mrs. Mary Blanchard, Mrs. Clara A. Rank, Mrs. Cecile Claassen, Mrs. Mary Andre, Mrs. Mary Martin Chambers for her parents, Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Martin, Miss Leota Swem, Mr. S. H. Hartley, Mr. W. L. Crissman, Mr. Edmund Goedelman, Miss Nelle Erwin, and Mrs. Orpha Grimm.

All bequests and special gifts of this kind were treated as capital funds and kept separate from the operating funds of the church.

It should be mentioned that Mr. Crissman attended and contributed to the church for more than 60 years. Mr. Goedelman was an interesting character. He attended church in clean work clothes and held himself apart, unless spoken to. He never made a regular contribution, but on two occasions, in 1949 and again in 1953, he handed the minister an envelope containing \$1000 in bills. When he left town in 1956 to retire to the Oddfellows Home in Mason City, he deeded his house (which was worth close to \$5,000) to the church.

This is a good place to pay tribute to Miss Nell Cherry. Mr. Curray, who was treasurer for about 25 of the 29 years between 1930 and 1959, is certain that Miss Cherry has been the church's most generous contributor in its entire history. If she had not been able and willing to contribute substantially in the early '30's, the church could not have existed, and in most of the years since 1930 the budget could not have been balanced without her generous gifts. In addition, she served several terms on the Board of Trustees, worked on financial campaigns, was active in various church organizations and in general has been one of our most effective members.

## *Community Use of the Church*

Dr. Burkhalter wrote in the 1923 article already quoted: "The history of this church has been of deep and momentous interest," and the November issue of the *Palimpsest* of 1949 said, "The Peoples Church has rooted itself deeply in the community where its influential leadership is felt in numerous civic, social and educational achievements." The use of the building by many groups of the city would seem to bear this out.

As early as 1880 and 1883 "The Christian People" were given permission to meet four times a week in the church for a very small fee. In 1890 the Board of Trustees approved the use of the organ by students if properly supervised. In 1896 the Cedar Rapids Woman's Club was founded in this church with Mrs. G. F. Van Vechten, an honored member of this church, as its first president. Then in 1909 Mrs. G. F. Van Vechten and Mrs. C. D. Van Vechten secured permission for the Club to rent the social rooms for their meetings. In 1903 the social room was rented to the Millenium Dawn Society for meetings Sundays at three o'clock, for one dollar a meeting. From January 1907 the "Second Christian Science Society" rented the church for Sunday afternoon and Wednesday evening services until they moved into their own building in March 1915. In 1914 various music teachers used this church for recitals. The Linn County Progressive Committee also made use of it.

For years, beginning in 1909, it has been a place for public lectures. Dr. Newton started this with literary lectures "that have awakened a new and lasting literary activity in this community." In the '20's this Newton tradition was continued by Dr. Argow in lecture series, in "Outspoken Thoughts" in the *Gazette* and in service for the public good. In the '40's and '50's Waldemar Argow was exceedingly civic-minded, a leader in many types of organizations, giving book-nights to the general public, sponsoring lecture series with Temple Judah for three years and offering other lectures free.

In 1941 and 1942 there was Red Cross work in our church in the form of a sewing unit and a class in home-nursing. In 1943 the Home Nursing Club used the social rooms for classes. In 1945 the King's Daughters rented the social rooms once a month. The Needlework Guild held a series of meetings there. In 1952 and 1953 the Footlighters used the rooms for rehearsals



at a nominal fee to cover light and heat. Also in 1953 the N. A. A. C. P. used the church for a two-day meeting.

From 1954 through 1957 until the opening of the Margaret and Howard Hall Radiation Center, the Linn County Cancer Society used the lower rooms as an office for their membership drives. In June 1956 the Iowa Council of Campfire Girls held their meeting in the social rooms.

During the ministry of Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow, Temple Judah was organized in this church and started its services here.

From 1952 to 1958 the Playground Commission used the lower rooms every Thursday afternoon for the Happy Hour Golden Age Club with some 70 elderly members. In 1954 they arranged to use it during the summer also. Several times their director wrote to express gratitude, saying that "the church is meeting a real need of the community by offering this space."

This kind of community service is all done so quietly that the members and friends of The Peoples Church themselves have no idea of the many human beings this church has served and is serving. This is an integral part of its basic philosophy.

### *Rev. Napoleon W. Lovely Installed*

Rev. N. W. Lovely was formally installed as minister of The Peoples Church at an unusually impressive service Thursday evening, November 13, 1958. Taking part in the ceremony were Rev. Robert Raible of Dallas, Texas, and his son, Rev. Peter Raible of Lincoln, Nebraska, Rev. Ellsworth M. Smith, Regional Director of the Western Unitarian Conference, Rev. John W. Brigham of Burlington, Iowa, and Mr. Lovely's son, Rev. Brandoch L. Lovely of Austin, Texas.

The words that Pulpit Committee Chairman, Dr. Vernon E. Lichtenstein, and the congregation said in affirmation of the installation are worth preserving here. They underscore the responsibility of the membership in undertaking such a partnership. They went as follows:

"We, the Congregation of The Peoples Church of Cedar Rapids, do hereby install you as minister of this church. On our part we solemnly pledge ourselves, so far as we are able, to walk with you and with each other in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in the ways of truth, known or to be made known to us. And we further engage ourselves to work constructively one with another for the prosperity of our church and the service of mankind."

Mr. Lovely, with his scholarly and literary background, symbolizes the Peoples Church and its liberal tradition. He realizes that he holds in his hand the key to its future, as evi-

denced by his words of dedication at his installation service, quoted in part as follows:

"Friends, with a deep sense of responsibility, confessing my dependence upon your patience and good will, as well as upon the divine energy and vitality of the liberal tradition, I take up the ministry of this church to which you have called me. I do solemnly engage to speak from this pulpit, as a free man, the clearest truth I hold; to deal frankly in the spirit of love with all men, both publicly and privately; (and) diligently to perform the several offices of worship, instruction, and administration, in a democratic and cooperative way, according to the tradition of this congregation and fellowship of which we are a part."

A few sentences from his paragraph on the prospectus of the School of Religion reflect his philosophy of the education of the liberal:

"Religious Education, it seems to the Liberal, succeeds only as long as it remains unfinished . . . . Whether you are young or old, religious education should keep you intensely aware of the wonder, the mystery, of your world and should give you the desire to penetrate the world of mystery with the heart and mind until its hidden truths are revealed. And along with these truths you discover new horizons to challenge you again and again to unceasing growth."

By way of conclusion to this present history with its span of nearly a century, from 1869 to 1959, the words that Dr. Argow used to close the 1925 history are still appropriate, if we substitute 84 years for the 50 of that day:

"Fifty years have slipped by since the cornerstone was laid. What years of toil and sacrifice they have been! Today we find ourselves still engaged in laying cornerstones, not of stone, but of ideals, of dreams, and visions on which to build the invisible temple of humanity; one in which all the children of men, who are the sons of God, may work and worship in the spirit of Freedom, Friendship and Fraternity. Though naturally our history is in the past, our faces are to the future. For what the past has done we are deeply grateful; but for what the future holds we are even more grateful."

## TABLE OF MINISTERS

The following is a complete list of the men who have served the church as its ministers with their years of service:

*Rev. W. C. Brooks—around 1870-1872*

*Rev. B. T. Snooks—around 1872-1874*

*Rev. B. F. Rogers—1874-1876*

*Rev. H. W. Chase—1876-1877*

*Rev. W. W. Nutting—1877-1879*

*Rev. D. H. Rogan—1880-1884*

*Rev. Dr. W. A. Pratt—1884-1889*

*Rev. J. H. Palmer—1889-1900*

*Rev. George Crum—1900-1902*

*Rev. Dr. W. A. Pratt—1902-1908*

*Rev. Dr. Joseph Fort Newton—1908-1917*

*Rev. Dr. Harold B. Drew—1917-1918*

*Rev. Dr. E. H. Gelvin—1920-1921*

*Rev. Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow—1921-1930*

*(Dr. Herbert Martin filled the pulpit during the fall of 1930 and the spring of 1931.)*

*Rev. Melvin L. Welke—1931-1940*

*Rev. Rudolf W. Gilbert—1940-1942*

*(Pulpit filled by guest-speakers until June 1943)*

*Rev. George W. Marshfield—1943-1944*

*Rev. Waldemar Argow—1944-1957*

*(Pulpit filled by guest-speakers during the fall of 1957 and by Dr. Howard L. Parsons as interim-pastor during the spring of 1958.)*

*Rev. Napoleon William Lovely—1958-*



## SOURCES AND REFERENCES

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3. Bulletins and publications of the Church
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5. November 1949 issue of the *Palimpsest*, publication of the Iowa State Historical Society
6. History of Crescent Lodge No. 25 A. F. and A. M. from 1850 to 1905
7. Dr. Argow's short history of 1925, *A Backward Glance O'er Traveled Roads*
8. Clippings from the *Republican* and the *Gazette*
9. Conversations with Mr. Ed Buser
10. Conversations with Miss Grace and Miss Elisabeth Low
11. Conversation with Mrs. Stella Bachelder
12. Conversation with Mr. Walter Allison
13. Conversations with and historical material from Mr. and Mrs. Lumir Vondracek
14. Conversation with Mrs. Lenore Stark Topinka
15. Material and written information from Mrs. John M. Ely, Jr.
16. Conversations with and material from Mrs. J. C. Mahannah
17. Correspondence with Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow
18. *River of Years*, by Dr. Joseph Fort Newton
19. *Epic of America* by James Truslow Adams
20. *Pioneer Days in Cedar Rapids* by Charles A. Laurance
21. *The Story of Cedar Rapids* by Janette Stevenson Murray and Frederick Gray Murray











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